BISHOP BUTLER

HIS LIFE AND WRITINGS

By

REV. W. A. SPOONER

Canon of Christ Church Cathedral, Oxford

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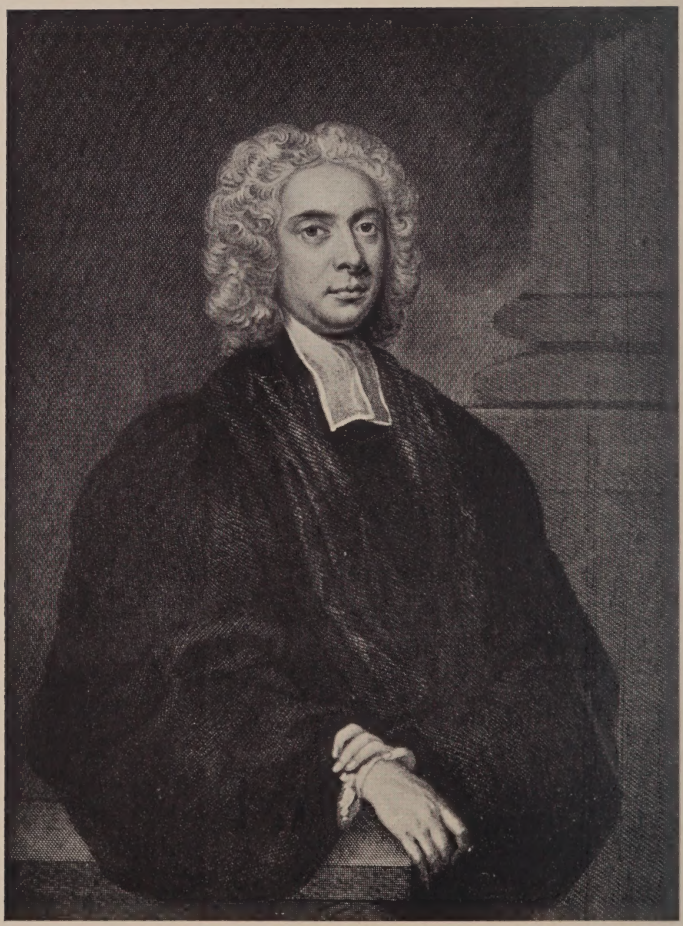

BISHOP BUTLER

AFTER A PAINTING BY VANDERBANK

BISHOP BUTLER

BY

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PREFACE

THE publication within the last five years of two elaborate, and even sumptuous, editions of Bishop Butler's works seems to prove that they have still an interest for the reading public. Nor is it surprising that this should be the case. There is much in the temper and methods of our author which falls in with the needs of our own time and suits its scientific spirit.

With these larger and more elaborate editions the present work comes in no way into competition. Its object is twofold; first, to view Butler in his historical setting, — to see him in the light of the times in which he lived, the questions with which his thoughts were occupied, the controversies in which he bore so leading a part. On this side this little book merely attempts in a limited field what all history aims at on a larger scale. But, in the second place, an endeavour has been made to appraise the value of Butler's contributions to English thought, to separate the solid and permanent element in his writings from the more or less ephemeral and transitory, to determine what lessons of abiding interest for our own day his works contain.

In executing the former part of my task I have to acknowledge the deep debt I am under to Mr. Leslie Stephen's *History of English Thought in the Eighteenth Century*, and to Mr. Pattison's essay on *Tendencies of Religious Thought in England*, 1688–1750. Without these two admirable works this book would either never have been written or would have taken quite a different shape. If I have ventured sometimes to express my dissent from Mr. Stephen it is not because I impugn his facts or desire to controvert his arguments, but because I feel I differ from him on some fundamental questions of principle.

To Mr. Gladstone's edition of Butler's works I am greatly indebted for the division into sections which has made reference to the whole of Butler's writings for the first time possible and easy. In the references in the footnotes I have adopted throughout his division into sections. I have also followed him in referring to the Fifteen Sermons preached at the Rolls under the title of Sermons, and to the Six Sermons preached on public occasions as SS. In places, too, I have received real help from the *Analysis* given as a heading to the different sections. In other respects my debt to him is rather less that I anticipated. Of the Dissertations contained in the volume of *Studies Subsidiary to Butler's Works* some seemed to lie somewhat apart from the main topics treated of by Butler himself, while others appeared of rather subordinate interest. Yet no lover of Butler can fail to acknowledge how much Mr. Gladstone has done for

the study of Butler's works by making them generally accessible to the reading public, and commending them by the authority of his great name. Works to which Mr. Gladstone acknowledged his obligations, and to the elucidation of which he devoted the declining years of his life, could not fail to have attractions for many, at least in our generation. Of other authors whom I have consulted I have learnt most from Dean Church and Mr. Bagehot. Dean Church's appreciation is singularly sympathetic, and expressed with that felicity of language which distinguishes all his writings, while Mr. Bagehot's article is marked by his accustomed shrewdness and independence of judgment.

In conclusion, I have to express my gratitude to my friend and colleague Mr. H. W. B. Joseph for the trouble he has taken in revising my proofs, and for several valuable criticisms and suggestions.

New College, Oxford,
August 1901.

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BISHOP BUTLER: HIS LIFE AND WRITINGS

CHAPTER I

LIFE AND TIMES

BISHOP BUTLER has recorded that he set before himself the search after truth as the business of his life.[1] This being his aim, his career was necessarily that of the student and thinker rather than of the man of action. As such, his life presents few incidents for his biographer to record. Another and even greater difficulty is presented by the character of the man himself. He lived during stirring times, but with a singular aloofness from them. His writings contain scarcely a reference to passing events (there is just one mention, and that is all, of the rebellion of '45[2]), and very few notices even of contemporary writers and thinkers. The consequence is that we know scarcely anything of what he thought or felt on current events or topics of the day. He lives and moves amongst them as one almost wholly unaffected by them. Nor was this absence of reference to specific events of his own time accidental. His impersonal style of writing was part of the very nature of the man. He wished to be

[1] Fourth Letter to Dr. Clarke.

[2] *Sermons on Public Occasions*, Sermon V. § 12.

judicial, impartial, and scientific, and he succeeded in no ordinary degree in realising his own ideal. His utterances were intended to be not so much his own individual utterances, as expressive of the voice of reason herself. Hence the absence of passion and of any personal feeling; hence, too, that quality in his writings which made them seem "somewhat too little vigorous, and not sufficiently earnest" for the taste of his contemporaries. But hence, also, that which has given them their permanent value and abiding authority; which has made them, as it has been well expressed,[1] the summary of the literature of an epoch; which has caused them to be read and valued, while the almost innumerable publications among which they appeared have dropped out and been forgotten, or are studied at most by those who, from whatever cause, are led to rake among the ashes of a now almost forgotten controversy.

But this self-suppression, this impersonal character of his writings, however much it may have added to their philosophic and permanent value, has added at least in the same degree to the difficulty of the task of Butler's would-be biographer. It has deprived him of the most important and trustworthy materials from which a satisfactory biography might have been composed, that picture of the general development and growth of an author's thought and mind which must ever constitute the main interest of a student's and philosopher's life.

Nor has external evidence supplied to any considerable extent the void which Butler's method of writing has created. The bishop found no Boswell; and the earliest complete biography of him did not appear till more than sixty years after his death, and had then to be constructed from second-hand sources of

[1] Pattison, *Essay*.

information. Some, but unfortunately very few, interesting details are indeed to be gathered from the almost contemporary *Life of Archbishop Secker*, published by Porteous in 1772. Bishop Wilson's *Life and Letters* supply two or three more scanty notices. But both these sources of information go but a little way to satisfy our curiosity; and Mr. Bartlett's *Memoirs*, together with the earlier Life by Kippis contributed to the revised edition of the *Biographia Britannica*,[1] remain still our chief written authorities. Of more recent Lives, the two principal are that by Bishop Fitzgerald, prefixed to his edition of the *Analogy*; and a brightly written and accurate Life by Bishop Steere, to be found in his edition of the *Sermons*. The research, however, of these later writers has been able to add but little to what was already to be found in the fuller works of their predecessors.

Tradition, unfortunately, has also done exceedingly little to supplement our scanty information. Bishop Philpotts, one of Butler's successors in the rectory of Stanhope, took much pains to glean what few traditions still lingered in the parish about his distinguished predecessor; but nothing practically came of the search. Old people seemed to remember that Butler was to be met riding fast on a black pony, and that he gave liberally to beggars; but that was all. Nor did Oriel College, Bristol, or St. Paul's treasure up any certain memories about him. At each of these places his name survived, but scarcely anything besides. Of his life at Bristol, Dean Tucker, who was for some time his chaplain, has preserved a few details which will be related in their proper place. From one of Butler's own letters[2] we are able to frame a scanty

[1] Published in 1772. It is said to have been based in part on notes furnished by one of the bishop's nephews.

[2] Letter to the Duchess of Somerset, see below, page 42.

picture of his chief occupations during his too brief sojourn at Auckland Castle; and Dr. Nathaniel Foster, his chaplain in his closing years, has preserved for us, in a few short and hasty letters written to Secker at the time, a somewhat meagre description of the closing scenes of his life.

Though the details which would fill in the picture and give it life and interest are thus wanting, yet the main facts of his career are notorious, and fortunately beyond dispute. Joseph Butler, the youngest of eight children of a well-to-do retired draper of the little country town of Wantage in Berkshire, was born in a house called the Chantry, lying just outside the town, on May 18, 1692.[1] Respecting his father, two facts only are known—that he was a Presbyterian in religion, and that he was in comfortable circumstances. Of Butler's childhood no records have been preserved.

[1] There is perhaps some little doubt about the date of his birth. May 18, 1692, is the date given in all the biographies from Kippis downwards. On the other hand, the Register of the University of Oxford gives his age as seventeen when he matriculated a member of Oriel on March 17, 1714. If this date were correct he could not have been born till May 1696. But there are almost insuperable difficulties in accepting the age as stated in the University Register. In the first place, we should have to believe that the correspondence with Dr. Clarke was carried on by him while still a mere lad of sixteen; but he himself, in his first letter, writes as if he had attained an age to which speculations of the kind he was engaged in were at least natural, and as if, further, he had already been engaged for some time in them. In the next place, he was ordained both deacon and priest in the year 1717. Now, supposing the accepted date of his birth to be correct, he would be by that time of the suitable age of twenty-five, whereas if we were to accept the date given in the University Register he would be only just twenty years old, an age at which, even in those lax times, it is unlikely that he would have received ordination. Nor is it likely, again, that so young a man could have been appointed to so important a post as that of preacher at the Rolls in the next year. On these different grounds it would seem as if the traditional date is to be preferred, and we must suppose that some error has crept at this point into the Register of the University.

His earliest instruction he received at the Grammar School of his native town, where he was a pupil under the Rev. Philip Barton. That he retained some regard for this, his earliest, instructor may be, perhaps, gathered from the fact that, when in 1740 he was appointed Dean of St. Paul's, he presented Mr. Barton to almost the first piece of preferment that fell to his gift, the rectory of Hutton in Essex.

If we may believe a statement in Kippis's Life, Butler, while still a boy, exhibited unusual signs of intellectual ability, and it was for this reason that his father designed him for admission into the Presbyterian ministry, and sent him to be educated at the then justly famous Dissenting Academy conducted by Mr. Samuel Jones, first at Gloucester, and subsequently at Tewkesbury. At this establishment the boy and his friends were educated not only in mathematics and classics, but also in logic and Hebrew.[1] Indeed, Mr. Jones must have been a teacher of no ordinary skill and vigour, for among the sixteen pupils who were at this time under his instruction were to be found not only Butler himself, but also Secker, his lifelong friend, afterwards Archbishop of Canterbury; Maddox, subsequently Bishop of Worcester; Chandler, the well-known Nonconformist divine; and Bowes, afterwards Lord Chancellor of Ireland. Lardner, the famous Biblical critic, was also a pupil in the same school, but at a somewhat later date.

It was while a pupil at Tewkesbury that Butler gave the first public proof of his ability as a metaphysician and thinker, in the famous letters addressed by him to Dr. Clarke, then regarded as the foremost philosopher of his age. Clarke had given, in his Boyle Lectures delivered in 1704 and 1705, what he claimed to be a demonstrative proof of the being and attributes of

[1] Porteous's *Life of Secker*.

God. Butler, writing first on November 14, 1713, ventures to throw doubts on two of the arguments on which Clarke had relied, or rather to state certain difficulties which stood in the way of his acceptance of them. In this letter, written when he was but twenty-one years of age, and at a time when he had received only a school training, he tells Dr. Clarke "that he had made it his business, ever since he thought himself capable of such sort of reasoning, to find out, if possible, a demonstrative proof of the being and attributes of God," and was therefore delighted to come upon so distinguished a reasoner as Clarke engaged on the same quest. The argument of Clarke to which Butler objects was one in which he deduced the omnipresence of God from His necessary existence. "If," said Clarke, "God could be absent from any one part of space, He could equally be absent from all; but if He could be absent from all, this would seem to imply that His existence in any was not necessary; but this supposition is incompatible with the presumed necessity of His self-existence." To this Butler objects, "the argument proves, indeed, that God cannot be absent from all places at the same time, but fails to show that He may not be absent from them all at different times; and therefore God is not necessarily shown by it to be present in all spaces at any one time." When Clarke had replied, that "in his conception a necessary being has a necessary existence in every part of space," Butler professes himself somewhat doubtfully satisfied with the argument, but adds, in a subsequent letter,[1] "I am really at a loss about the nature of space and duration," as if he were not yet entirely convinced.

The other point on which he feels a difficulty is Clarke's contention that a self-existent Being must

[1] Letter V.

be necessarily one; for if there were more than one self-existent Being or substance, one or other of them would have to be thought of as contingent, and would therefore lose its quality of self-subsistence. To this Butler objects, that he can see here no necessary connection between the antecedent and the consequent. "For why is it not possible at least to conceive of each of the two self-existent substances as existing in absolute isolation and independence of the other? in which case the self-existence of the one would not involve the contingency of the other." Clarke explains in answer, that in his view a Being or substance can only be regarded as self-existent when its existence is implied in and is necessary to the existence of every thing besides; and that, if self-existence be used in this sense, then the idea of two self-existent Beings does necessarily involve a contradiction in terms. In this case, again, Butler admits that his opponent has the best of the argument, but writes in such terms that it is clear his mind was not entirely satisfied on the subject.

The correspondence was not without influence on Butler's fortunes, and perhaps on the views and methods of argument which he ultimately adopted. Clarke was so much impressed with the force and ability with which the objections were stated, and even more with the fairness of mind, candour, and love of truth that they displayed, that he took considerable pains to find out who his correspondent was, as the letters had been sent to him anonymously, having been posted by Secker for his friend at Gloucester. Further, he seems to have regarded the writer of the letters, when discovered, as one whose interests were to be advanced; and so he was partly responsible for obtaining for Butler his first piece of preferment, his appointment as preacher at the Rolls. On Butler himself

the effect of the correspondence seems to have been to make him distrustful of the high *à priori* method which Clarke had adopted. The hesitation with which he found himself beset in accepting as convincing and satisfactory the abstract arguments which Clarke put forward led him to prefer that humbler and more tentative, but more satisfactory and conclusive, method of reasoning which rests on an appeal to observed and generally admitted facts. This was the method which he actually employed alike in the *Sermons* and in the *Analogy*. In truth, demonstrations like those of Clarke and earlier of Spinoza, modelled on the method used by Newton in his *Principia*, are less applicable in the sphere of theology than in those of mathematics, optics, and celestial mechanics—and that for two reasons. In the first place, the ideas with which theology deals are less clear and adequately grasped by our minds than are the notions of space, time, motion, force, direction, equality, and inequality which are used in the mathematical and kindred sciences; while, in the second place, we have not in theology the same chance of verifying our results by appeal to actual experience, and comparison with observed facts, which we possess in the case of the above-mentioned sciences. That Butler was wiser than his predecessor in his choice of method is shown by the far greater influence which his works have exercised on posterity than have those of Clarke, whose writings are now either wholly forgotten or only quoted as an example of an unconvincing and exploded metaphysic.

The correspondence took place during the last year of Butler's residence at Tewkesbury, and the same period was marked by a step which even more momentously affected his subsequent career. It was at this time that he resolved to quit the Presbyterian communion in which he had been brought up, and for

the ministry of which he had hitherto been designed, and to become a member of the Church of England. What were the motives which induced him to make the change we have no direct knowledge. He is himself silent on this as on every other matter which relates merely to his own personal history. Secker, when defending him after his death against the absurd charge of Romanising which had been brought against him, assures us "that he had never been zealous in his noncomformity, but had from a boy occasionally conformed and attended the services of the Church of England."[1] The great importance which in several passages in his writings Butler attaches to the historical continuity of the Church, its unbroken life and tradition,[2] shows that this aspect of the National Church must have appealed powerfully to his reason and imagination; while, as he points out in another place,[3] if it is easy to find objections to the system which the Church embodies, others equally great or even more formidable might be urged against the constitution of any of the existing Nonconformist sects. In truth, while these shared in the lethargy which had overtaken the Church, they were for the most part wanting in the learning and ability by which in that age the superior clergy of the Established Church were distinguished; and the perpetual feuds which they waged with one another, and the tendency they exhibited to divide up into ever fresh sects, deprived them of the authority which the more powerful among them had at an earlier date commanded. But whatever the motives were which induced him to take the step, of one thing we may be certain, that it was not taken without careful and anxious consideration, and a judicial weighing of the

[1] Secker's article in the *Gentleman's Magazine*.
[2] *Analogy*, part ii. chap. i.
[3] Sermon for the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, § 17.

arguments to be urged on either side. The whole cast of Butler's own temper and character, anxious and careful even to excess, precludes any other supposition; while the strenuousness of the opposition offered by his father, who is said even to have called in the assistance of the leading Presbyterian divines of the time to dissuade his son from the course he was meditating, would at least secure that the decision was taken neither hastily nor without due reflection.

When, however, the father found that his son's mind was fully made up on the matter he seems to have abandoned further resistance, and he allowed him to enter as a commoner at Oriel College, Oxford, on March 14, 1714—a step taken with a view apparently to his subsequent ordination. At Oriel Butler continued to reside till he took his B.A. degree four years later, October 18, 1718. Respecting these years spent at Oxford we know, unfortunately, exceedingly little. The university at this time was a centre and hotbed of Jacobitism, —a cause with which, both by temperament and early training, Butler could have had but little sympathy. This fact, together with his naturally reserved and despondent temper, explains a certain distaste for Oxford which there is some evidence to show he entertained during his undergraduate days. Yet he was not without friends, and deeply attached friends. One great intimacy we know him to have contracted, that with Edward Talbot, son of the Bishop of Salisbury, a fellow of Oriel College, but also holding at that time the cure of the little village of West Hendred on the Berkshire Downs. By Edward Talbot, Butler seems to have been introduced to his father, from whom subsequently he received ordination; to his brother Charles, afterwards Lord Chancellor, to whom the *Analogy* was dedicated; and to the excellent and amiable Martin Benson, student of Christ's Church, who remained his

attached and lifelong friend. Of Benson, Bishop Porteous has preserved a charming portrait in his *Life of Archbishop Secker*. "His purity," he writes, "though awfully strict, was inexpressibly amiable. It diffused such a sweetness through his temper and such a benevolence over his countenance as none, who were acquainted with him, can forget." Yet in spite of these friendships Butler, as we have already said, seems never to have grown heartily attached to Oxford. Indeed, from a letter written to Dr. Clarke, September 30, 1717, it appears that he even had thoughts of migrating to Cambridge, perhaps in order to be near to that distinguished man for whom he always entertained a sincere admiration. In the letter he consults Dr. Clarke on the choice of a tutor at Cambridge. The design, however, was from some cause or other abandoned, and Butler continued to reside at Oriel till he took his B.A. degree in the October of the following year.

A few days after taking his degree he was ordained deacon in the private chapel of the palace by his friend the Bishop of Salisbury, October 28, 1718; and received priest's orders from the same hands in St. James's, Westminster, on December 21st of the same year. His ordination as priest within a few months of his taking deacon's orders was probably connected with his appointment as preacher at the Rolls Chapel, which took place in this same autumn. This appointment, which he received from Sir George Jekyll, Master of the Rolls, he is said to have owed to the good offices of his friends, Bishop Talbot and his sons, and to the recommendation of his former correspondent, Dr. Clarke, now vicar of St. James's, Piccadilly. During the tenure of his preachership,—an office which he continued to hold for the next eight years,—Butler resided principally in London. When he arrived in town he found the so-called Bangorian controversy at its height. By some he

has been credited with the authorship of an anonymous pamphlet written in support of Hoadly, the liberal Bishop of Bangor, who pleaded for the purely spiritual character of the Church, and for the exercise of toleration towards Dissenters. The external evidence, however, for connecting the pamphlet with Butler's name is extremely weak; and at no period of his life does he seem to have had any relish for polemics and ecclesiastical controversy. We may therefore dismiss the suggestion as improbable. The sermons subsequently published (which he tells us [1] were a selection, taken more or less at random, from those preached in the Rolls Chapel during the course of the eight years for which he held the office of preacher) show that his mind was at this time mainly occupied, not with any passing topics of the day, but with the fundamental questions and problems of morals. Indeed, the air was at this time filled with such questions. Hobbes's works were probably still a powerful influence; though the length to which Mandeville had pushed his principles (his *Fable of the Bees* had just appeared), and the conclusion he had drawn from them, "That private vices are public benefits," had served to alienate the sympathy of all right-thinking men from them, and even to shock the moral sense of the community at large. Yet there was so much in Hobbes's writings which fell in with the professed selfishness and semi-avowed scepticism of the more refined and educated classes, that we find Butler selecting him as the most formidable exponent of the principles that he desired to impugn, and devoting some of his most telling pages to laying bare the fallacies and misrepresentations of human nature by which Hobbes's system was supported and vitiated.

Two other works on morals were at this time exciting much attention—Shaftesbury's *Characteristics* and

[1] *Sermons*, Preface.

Samuel Clarke's *Discourses concerning the Unchangeable Obligations of Natural Religion and the Truth and Certainty of the Christian Revelation.* The *Characteristics* had appeared only a few years previously,[1] while Dr. Clarke's work was much in vogue, and rapidly passing through various editions. Shaftesbury, Butler mentions with approval in the Preface to his *Sermons*,[2] but considers that he had not sufficiently vindicated the claim of "conscience" or "the moral sense," to speak with authority. Clarke's method he alludes to as the most "direct formal proof and, in some respects, the least liable to cavil and dispute," for treating questions of morals, though he prefers himself to adopt the humbler, but safer, method of a direct appeal to the facts of human nature. It is thus obvious that moral questions were, as the saying is, very much in the air; and since Butler saw in our moral beliefs, rightly interpreted, the only sure foundation on which religious systems can rest, we need not wonder that he devoted his earliest literary effort to the adequate exposition and needful defence of our fundamental moral convictions.

Apart from the duties of his office as preacher at the Rolls, two matters of a more personal and private interest engaged much of Butler's thoughts during his residence in London. The first of these was the death, from smallpox, of his friend Edward Talbot, which took place two years after his first settlement there, in the course of the year 1720. Talbot is said to have commended on his deathbed his two friends Butler and Benson (with the latter of whom he was connected by marriage) to his father for promotion. In compliance with his son's dying wish, Bishop Talbot the next year conferred on Butler a prebendal stall in Salisbury Cathedral, a post which he continued to hold till

[1] In 1711 A.D.

[2] *Sermons*, Preface, § 7.

appointed Bishop of Bristol. Shortly afterwards, on his promotion to the see of Durham, Bishop Talbot conferred on Benson a prebendal stall in his new cathedral.

The other matter which engaged Butler's attention was a correspondence which at this time he carried on with his friend Secker on the subject of the latter taking orders in the Church of England. Secker had, like Butler himself, been brought up a Dissenter, but had not seen his way to follow his friend when Butler had definitely joined the Church. Instead, he had determined to adopt the medical profession, and was at this time studying medicine in the schools of Paris. While here he was visited by Benson, then making a foreign tour, whom Butler had apparently furnished with a letter of introduction to his early friend. The joint influence of Benson and Butler availed to induce Secker to take the step he had been long meditating, and definitely determine to join the ranks of the clergy of the Church of England. There is no reason to doubt that Secker was actuated by conscientious motives in doing this, though his decision may have been quickened by a communication which Butler was authorised by Bishop Talbot to make to him, that should he see his way to becoming a clergyman the bishop would take care that he was not left unprovided for. Secker tells us himself that he was largely determined to join the Church by the dissatisfaction he felt with the disorders and disturbances which at that time widely prevailed among the dissenting sects.[1] As soon as he had made up his mind he hastened home and spent some years at Exeter College, Oxford, in taking his degree and preparing himself for the duties of his new calling. Soon after his ordination he married Catharine Benson, sister of Martin Benson, and cousin and intimate friend of

[1] *Life*, by Porteous.

Edward Talbot's widow, and was presented by Bishop Talbot, now become Bishop of Durham, to the living of Houghton-le-Spring, in the county of Durham. This was in 1724.

Two years before this Butler had himself received the living of Haughton, near Darlington, also in the bishop's gift. This he exchanged some three years later for the rich living of Stanhope. On the receipt of this latter preferment he resigned his preachership at the Rolls, and took up his permanent residence in the north country, induced thereto mainly, no doubt, by his desire to be near his patron, Bishop Talbot, and his two dear friends, Secker and Benson.

Before resigning his preachership at the Rolls, Butler published his *Fifteen Sermons*, gathered, as already mentioned, from many which he had preached during the eight years for which he had held the office. They were dedicated by him to his patron, Sir George Jekyll. At the time they were published they seem to have commanded only a fair measure of success, the public being repelled from them partly by the inherent difficulty of the subjects with which they deal, still more, perhaps, by the obscure and laboured, though manly and exact, style in which they were written. When, four years later, a second edition was called for, Butler, in the Preface (said to have been composed by Secker's advice and in part written with his assistance), defends himself against the charge of undue obscurity which had obviously been brought against them. "The obscurity complained of," he retorts, "is in great measure to be set down to the unwillingness which many readers show to give the attention necessary to weigh so abstruse a subject as is the more speculative aspect of morals";[1] partly, perhaps, to his having presumed a greater knowledge and more intimate acquaintance

[1] Preface, §§ 4 and 5.

with the prevailing thought and tone of discussion on the subject than many of his readers actually possessed; partly the very anxiety he felt to make his meaning clear, precise, and unmistakable, may in some cases have added to the difficulty of at once taking in that meaning. In order, however, to assist his readers for the future, he subjoins a sort of summary and elucidation of the general drift of his argument, which furnishes one of the most valuable portions of the book.

Is the charge of obscurity thus brought against Butler, alike by his own contemporaries and by many critics since, well deserved? On such a matter the reading public is the only judge. A writer whom most, even intelligent, readers find obscure, is obscure. Tried by this test, Butler will almost certainly stand convicted. Most readers will undoubtedly find him difficult, many almost incomprehensible. Indeed, Mr. Gladstone himself, the great defender of Butler's mode of writing, admits a difficulty in following the thought, by providing his readers with headings to the different paragraphs to guide them in catching the main drift of the argument. But the obscurity which exists is not the obscurity of a loose or confused thinker. There was nothing loose or confused in Butler's mind; quite the reverse. The difficulty of the style arises from the extreme closeness and continuity of the thought; still more from the caution, many-sidedness, and conscientiousness of the writer, which would leave no aspect of the question unprovided for, no possible objection which might be taken unmet, no necessary limitation unexpressed, no possible misunderstanding of his meaning unguarded against. A man writing in such a spirit—particularly one of Butler's anxious and even morbidly conscientious temperament—could scarcely attain to a facile and unlaboured style; certainly Butler would have been less himself had his

style been less laboured,—with him, even more than with most other writers, is it true that "the style is the man."

It was during the quiet and retirement of the following years spent at Stanhope that Butler matured and executed the great work of his life, *The Analogy of Religion, Natural and Revealed, to the Constitution and Course of Nature.* That some at least of the topics treated in it had been long in his mind is evident from the Sermon[1] upon the Ignorance of Man, which foreshadows the argument of one of the most important chapters in the *Analogy.* A direction may further have been given to his thoughts by a correspondence which he carried on during his time at Stanhope with Henry Home (afterwards Lord Kaimes), the uncle of David Hume, "upon the evidences of natural and revealed religion." But, indeed, the work must for many years have engaged his thoughts. As he himself tells us, his object was "to meet, as he went along, every reasonable objection that could be urged against each successive position that he tried in turn to establish." All this involved much reading, long continuous thought, the careful weighing of many opposing considerations. He himself is the best guide to the spirit in which he wrote. "The general evidence of religion," he says in his *Durham Charge*, "is complex and various. It consists of a long series of things, one preparatory to and confirming another, from the very beginning of the world to the present time. And it is easy to see how impossible it must be, in a cursory conversation, to unite all this into one argument and represent it as it ought."[2] And again: "This reverential fear will lead us to insist strongly on the infinite greatness of God's scheme of government both in extent and duration, together with the wise connection of its

[1] Sermon XV. [2] *Charge*, § 8.

parts and the impossibility of accounting fully for the several parts, without seeing the whole plan of Providence to which they relate, which is beyond the utmost stretch of our understanding. And to all this must be added the necessary deficiency of human language when things divine are the subjects of it."[1] One who wrote with such considerations and convictions present to his mind could by no possibility write hastily or carelessly, or indeed in any other way than after weighing anxiously and painfully every argument used, and even every word set down. In strict accordance with the principles here enunciated are the characteristics of the *Analogy* as summed up by Mr. Pattison: "Like Aristotle's physical and political treatises, the *Analogy* is a *résumé* of the discussions of more than one generation. Its admirable arrangement only is all its own. Its closely packed and carefully fixed order speaks of many years' contrivance. Its substance is the thoughts of a whole age, not barely compiled, but each reconsidered and digested. Every brick in the building has been rung before it has been relaid, and replaced in its true relation to the complex and various whole."[2] Such, we instinctively feel, was the temper in which the whole *Analogy* was composed. It remains, therefore, one of the monumental works in our language, a model, as all competent critics allow, of conscientious, judicious, closely reasoned, serious religious writing. The work was not published till 1736, when Butler had been at Stanhope just over ten years, and was dedicated to Lord Chancellor Talbot, who had made Butler his chaplain some three years previously. In the Dedication Butler gratefully acknowledges the debt which he owed alike to father and to son for the friendship and consideration they had extended to him.

[1] *Charge*, § 10.

[2] Pattison's *Essays*, vol. ii., Essay II. pp. 75, 76.

How far the *Analogy* was an immediate success it is not easy, and it is not necessary, to decide. It was not a work altogether suited to the taste of the time, which looked for something smarter and more racy than the judicial strength and sobriety of Butler's writing. Even the orthodox, used to the strong language and slashing blows of Warburton or Bentley, regarded his style as somewhat too little vigorous. On the other hand, there is the evidence in its favour that a second edition was very early called for, and that Queen Caroline warmly praised the book, telling Lord Hay that she found it very intelligible, that she had read it and understood it easily, "that it was a scheme or medium between Wollaston and Dr. Clarke, but that Butler was a little too severe and expected too much perfection in the world."[1] Bishop Wilson himself, from whose Memoir by his son the above extract is taken, seems also to have greatly prized and valued it; while the honours which, apparently with general approbation, were from the date of its publication showered thick on Butler, show the high reputation in which he was held among those in authority, even if sometimes they failed to understand him.

But, in truth, Butler had already begun to make a name, and his worth to be appreciated, before the *Analogy* appeared. The death of Bishop Talbot in 1730 had broken up the little circle of close friends whom he had gathered round him in the Durham diocese. Benson was the first to go; he was appointed as early as 1728 to the living of Bletchley in Buckinghamshire, and six years afterwards, much against his own will, he became Bishop of Gloucester. Secker followed in 1733, being in that year made Rector of St. James's, Piccadilly, while, three years later, he received the Bishopric of Bristol.

[1] Quoted in Keble's *Life of Bishop Wilson*, p. 922.

With him went Edward Talbot's widow and daughter Catharine, who, after Secker's marriage with Miss Benson, became constant inmates of his home. As they were also attached friends of Butler, and often stayed with him at Stanhope, he cannot but have felt the loss of their society. It is not wonderful, then, that when in 1733 Lord Talbot, just made Lord Chancellor, nominated him his chaplain, Butler should have accepted the office, and relieved his solitude and varied his duties at Stanhope by occasional visits to London. In 1736 Lord Talbot gave him a stall in Rochester Cathedral, and the same year he was appointed Clerk to the Closet by Queen Caroline, having been introduced to her by the good offices of his friend Secker a short time previously. Between him and the Queen there soon grew up something approaching to friendship; she, like others, being touched by the manly simplicity and unostentatious piety of his character. The warm approval she expressed of the *Analogy* on its first publication has been already noticed. Butler was summoned by her to join the select circle of distinguished men whom she invited to discuss every evening, from seven to nine o'clock, fundamental questions of religious and philosophic interest. Shortly before her death, which occurred November 20, 1737, she received at Hampton Court the Holy Communion at his hands, and on her deathbed warmly recommended him to the king for patronage.

George II., who was sincerely, if oddly and selfishly, attached to his wife, proved mindful in this, as in other matters, of the Queen's wishes. Soon after her death (as we learn on the authority of Sir George Jekyll, Master of the Rolls, Butler's earliest patron[1]) he desired that Butler, as having been Clerk of the Closet to the Queen, should preach before him in the

[1] *Diary of Dr. Wilson*, December 23, 1737.

Princess Amelia's apartments. Butler took as his subject that "of being bettered by afflictions," and the king professed himself so much impressed by his discourse that he desired the sermon should be given him, and assured the preacher he would do something very good for him. This promise he fulfilled by offering him in the next year the see of Bristol, vacant by the translation of Dr. Gooch to that of Norwich.[1] Butler seems to have been disappointed at the choice of the preferment thus proposed for him. The bishopric was too small in value to be held alone, being worth only £400 a year, and was too far distant from Stanhope to be held conveniently with that living. In the letter which he wrote to Walpole accepting the bishopric, he expresses himself with much freedom on this point. "I received yesterday from your own hand (an honour which I ought very particularly to acknowledge) the information that the king had nominated me to the Bishopric of Bristol. I most truly think myself very highly obliged to his Majesty, as much, all things considered, as any subject in his dominions, for I know no greater obligation than to find the queen's condescending goodness and kind intentions towards me transferred to his Majesty. Nor is it possible while I live to be without the most grateful sense of his favour to me, whether the effects of it be greater or less; for this must in some measure depend upon accidents. Indeed, the Bishopric of Bristol is not very suitable either to the condition of my fortune or the circumstances of my preferment; nor, as I should have thought, answerable to the recommendation with which I was honoured. But you will excuse me, sir, if I think of this last with greater sensibility than the conduct of affairs will admit of. But without

[1] Dr. Gooch had succeeded Secker, who had now been made Bishop of Oxford.

entering further into detail, I desire, sir, you will please to let his Majesty know that I humbly accept this instance of his favour with the utmost possible gratitude." The letter, as Mr. Matthew Arnold reminds us, is not exactly that of a saint; it rings with that prosaic way of looking at things, that taking "a reasonable view of them," which was characteristic of the early part of the eighteenth century; but it has at least these merits—it is absolutely free from cant, it is straightforward, and it is manly; in some respects it contrasts favourably with other acceptances of office which have been more unctuous.

Butler retained the see of Bristol for the next twelve years, from 1738 to his translation to Durham in 1750. For the first eighteen months of this term he continued to hold the rectory of Stanhope along with the bishopric; but when, in 1740, he was appointed by the king to the Deanery of St. Paul's, he resigned both Stanhope and the prebendal stall at Rochester, to which he had been presented by Lord Talbot. After the resignation of these two additional pieces of preferment he was free to divide his time between his diocese and London. To enable him the better to carry on his work in the latter place, he bought himself a house at Hampstead, in which he resided for a considerable part of the year, and where he delighted hospitably to entertain his friends.

Of the spirit in which he attempted to administer his diocese we have an interesting record in a meditation written by his own hand which dates from this period.[1] It runs as follows: "Shall I not be faithful to God? If He puts a part upon me to do, shall I neglect or refuse it? A part to suffer, and shall I say, 'I would not, if I could help it'? Can words more ill-sorted, more shocking, be put together? And is

[1] Steere's *Memoir of Bishop Butler*.

not the thing expressed by them more so, tho' not expressed in words? What, then, shall I prefer to the sovereign Good, supreme Excellence, absolute Perfection? To whom shall I apply for direction in opposition to Infinite Wisdom? To whom for protection against Almighty Power? Dated June 14, 1742." Of his private life at Bristol we have two anecdotes preserved by Dr. Tucker, then his chaplain, afterwards Dean of Gloucester. The first is the well-known story of the bishop's speculation as to the possibility of nations going mad as well as individuals. On one occasion, so Tucker relates, when he was walking with him, the bishop suddenly stopped and asked: "What security is there against the insanity of individuals? — The physicians know of none"; and then, after a pause— "Why may not whole communities be seized with fits of insanity as well as individuals? Nothing but this can account for a great part of what we read in history."[1] Tucker also tells us that the bishop used at this time to walk in his garden late at night buried in meditation, and that he read much of books of devotion and of the lives of the saints. We also learn that another matter which engaged his attention during a good deal of these years was the repair and renovation of the episcopal palace. He seems throughout his life to have been devoted to building; and as the palace at Bristol, when he succeeded to the see, had fallen into a somewhat ruinous condition, he found here ample opportunity for gratifying his taste. He is said to have spent between £4000 and£5000 upon it, more than ten years' income of the see. As he himself said, it would have been impossible for him to do this had he not been helped by the resources of the deanery of St. Paul's. In the execution of the work (at least, in the judgment of the antiquarian, Mr. Cole, who visited Bristol in

[1] Tucker's pamphlet, *An Humble Address, etc.*, 1775.

1746) he exhibited both skill and taste, being specially careful to preserve every relic of the past which seemed of value and interest, and to keep himself studiously in the background. On the chapel in particular he expended great pains, renewing entirely its internal fittings; and, while retaining the ancient glass in the east window, erecting underneath it a cross of white marble let into a black background. The insertion of such an ornament, though it seemed to Mr. Cole "simple and to have a good effect," ran counter to the taste of the time and brought upon the bishop, while still alive, the charge of having popish proclivities, and after his death was used as an argument to prove that he had actually joined the Church of Rome. That the execution of the work was not without interest to the people of Bristol is shown by the fact that some of the merchants of that city made the bishop a present of a considerable quantity of cedar-wood, to be used on the fittings of the palace. Some of this, as it was more than was required for the work at Bristol, he took with him to Durham, intending to use it on the repair of the palace of Bishop Auckland—a task, however, he did not live to accomplish.

Two points relating to the administration of his diocese deserve a word of notice. First, the care he took, both here and elsewhere, in the selection of suitable candidates for ordination, and even more for preferment and promotion. Laxity and negligence on the part of the bishops in these particulars, or, worse still, their favouritism and nepotism, seem, on contemporary evidence, to have been among the crying evils of the time. In a tract, which enjoyed much popularity some years previously, entitled, "Ichabod, or the Five Groans of the Church," the evils complained of are, the negligence of the bishops as to the persons whom they ordained, the profaneness of the clergy, the prevalence of simony,

pluralities, and non-residence. Against all such practices Butler strongly set his face, no less in London and Durham than at Bristol. It was observed of him that he practised what he preached as much when his own family was concerned as when called on to deal with outsiders. As cases in point, we may observe not only that he refused preferment to one of his nephews whom he did not think suitable for it, but that he also chose as his chaplain Mr. Tucker, simply on the ground of the work he had done as curate of one of the Bristol churches.

The other point has to do with his treatment of Wesley and Whitfield. Wesley returned from Georgia the year of Butler's consecration, and began his preaching at Kingswood, a rough mining village near Bristol, in the next year. Here he was joined by Whitfield. The movement set on foot by them seems early to have attracted the bishop's attention, for Wesley has preserved in his works the minutes of a conversation held with Butler in the very next year. In the course of this the bishop, after criticising the form of the doctrine of justification by faith held and taught by Wesley, on the ground that it ascribed an arbitrary character to God's dealings with men, and was not in accordance with the teaching of the Church of England on the subject, finds further and more severe fault with the claims set up by Mr. Whitfield to the possession of extraordinary revelations and gifts of the Holy Ghost. He also censures Wesley's mode of administration of the sacraments in the societies he had founded (though his action in this matter Wesley vehemently affirms had been misrepresented), and the encouragement which both he and Whitfield gave to extravagant physical manifestations of emotion which prevailed in their religious services and accompanied the sense of conversion. The interview ended, if Wesley's memory served him right, with a refusal on the bishop's part to give him his licence

to preach in the diocese and a claim on Wesley's to preach without it, since he had been ordained, not to any particular charge, but on the strength of his college fellowship. In the course of the same year Butler carried on also a correspondence with Whitfield. Of this all that has been preserved is a single reply of Whitfield's to a letter of the bishop's, now unfortunately lost. From this it appears that Butler had showed himself not unappreciative of the better side of Whitfield's work, and had personally interposed to mitigate the excessive zeal of his chancellor against the new movement, and to secure for Whitfield himself an opportunity of being heard in those of the churches of the diocese, the clergy of which were inclined to look favourably on the cause. Further, that Kingswood might not suffer from his refusal to grant Wesley a licence to preach there, Butler set himself to procure the erection of a church in this neighbourhood. To the church a new parish was by Act of Parliament annexed, and towards the endowment of this the bishop himself contributed £400 and obtained for it an additional £200 from a lady of his acquaintance. Reviewing the whole incident, we should gather that while Butler had not, any more than his contemporaries, the insight to see the strength which the movement of Wesley and Whitfield might, if enlisted in her service, have brought to the Church of England, yet his criticisms on their action were cautious and well considered, and the movement was judged of by him in a kindly and equitable spirit. The anxiety he displayed to make good the defects which the preaching of the missioners at Kingswood had brought to light is only one instance of what is noticeable in his whole career, his conscientious desire to fulfil loyally and exactly any duty that was in any way brought home to him.

Turning now to the duties and interests which occupied him in London during these years, we observe

that in his home at Hampstead, which he fitted up with some magnificence and taste,[1] he entertained many of his friends,—Bishop and Mrs. Secker, Bishop Benson, Mrs. and Miss Talbot being among his most constant guests. To the public interests which most engaged his attention "The Six Sermons preached on Public Occasions," all of them delivered in London, and all of them falling within this epoch, furnish a pretty good index. The earliest of them, preached in the Parish Church of St. Mary-le-Bow on February 16, 1738 (–39), was the anniversary sermon of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts. This society, founded originally in the year 1701, the last year of the reign of William and Mary, had, since its foundation, advanced with rapid steps. Its operations, directed at the outset solely to the spread of the gospel on the continent of Europe, had now extended so as to embrace almost all our then existing colonial possessions, the North American colonies, Newfoundland, the West Indies, and Nova Scotia. In the sermon in question the bishop eloquently defends the work the society was carrying on, alike among our own people in the colonies, and among the natives in whose midst our planters had settled. The duty of giving support to the work of the society, and other similar undertakings, is thus deduced from the fundamental conception of the Church itself.

The original deposit of "natural religion" having been forgotten or almost allowed to die out in the world, was "authoritatively republished," with certain other truths necessary to man's salvation added to it, in the Christian dispensation. "But Christianity once published, it was left with Christians either to transmit it pure and

[1] Some of the stained glass with which the staircase was adorned was subsequently presented to Oriel College, and is still in the possession of that society; but of the details of the gift, and even of the name of the donor, no record seems to have been preserved.

genuine, or to allow it to be corrupted or forgotten; just as the religion of nature had before been left with mankind in general." But in the case of Christians, God further enjoined that they should be united in communities and visible churches, through the agency of which the truths of the Christian religion should be promulgated and kept alive in the world. "These communities, which together make up the Catholic Church, are the repositories of the written oracles of God, and in every age have preserved and published these in every country where the profession of Christianity has obtained; and out of these churches have all along gone forth persons who have preached the gospel in remote places with more or less good effect." The duty of the Church, to bear witness to the truth (and that equally whether men will listen to it or not), being thus fundamental, and it being, further, God's will that men should be dependent on their fellow-men for instruction alike in the matters of natural knowledge and of revealed truth (of the second, indeed, even more than of the first), it follows that "Christianity is very particularly to be considered as a trust, deposited with us in behalf of mankind, as well as for our own instruction." "No one hath a right to be called a Christian who doth not do somewhat in his station towards the discharge of this trust; who doth not, for instance, assist in keeping up the profession of Christianity where he lives." "And it is an obligation but little more remote to assist in doing it in our factories abroad, and in the colonies to which we are related by their being peopled from our own mother-country, and subjects (indeed, very necessary ones) to the same government with ourselves; and nearer yet is the obligation upon such persons, in particular, as have the intercourse of an advantageous commerce with them." He goes on to plead in the same way the obligation we are under to instruct the slaves, "who ought to be considered

as inferior members, and therefore to be treated as members of our colonies"; and the natives who, too, "have a claim on our charity both from neighbourhood and also from our having gotten possessions in their country." Our trade and commerce would thus be "consecrated," if made the means of propagating religion in every country with which we have intercourse. And this preaching of the gospel, even if not crowned with general and immediate success, is at anyrate a witness. It will surely bear fruit in due season, and will take possession at once of some few who are the salt of those among whom they live. "The design before us being thus, in general, unexceptionally good, it were much to be wished that serious men of all denominations would join in it." He accordingly appeals to Dissenters to lay aside their prejudices and support the Church in this great undertaking, even though they should think some of her methods liable to objection. The spread of Christianity abroad cannot but react upon religion at home, and so diminish the evils of profaneness and atheism, and of that which grows out of them as a necessary consequence, the spread of superstition, these being the special dangers by which, in his belief, his age and country were threatened. To stem such evils was a task too great, he held, for individuals; it could only be done, if done at all, by the help of organised societies like that for the Propagation of the Gospel.

Butler's interest in the society was, however, by no means confined to preaching an occasional sermon in its behalf. In conjunction with his friends Secker and Benson, he continued throughout his life to promote and watch over its concerns.

One special matter in connection with it which much exercised his thoughts was the provision of bishops for our North American colonies. Technically, these colonies were within the diocese and under the

charge of the Bishop of London; practically, they received no episcopal supervision at all. Butler strenuously advocated a plan for providing them with bishops of their own. To meet the objections which were sure to be taken to such a proposal, he drew up the following memorandum as to the terms on which it was desirable that bishops should be appointed:—

"1. That no coercive power is desired over the laity in any case, but only a power to regulate the behaviour of the clergy who are in episcopal orders; and to correct and punish them according to the laws of the Church of England in case of misbehaviour or neglect of duty, with such power as the commissaries abroad have exercised.

"2. That nothing is desired for such bishops that may in the least interfere with the dignity or authority or interest of the Governor, or any other office of State. Probates of wills, licences for marriages, etc., to be left in the hands where they are; and no share in the temporal government is desired for the bishops.

"3. The maintenance of such bishops not to be at the charge of the colonies.

"4. No bishops are intended to be settled in places where the government is left in the hands of Dissenters, as in New England, etc.; but authority to be given only to ordain clergy for such Church of England congregations as are among them, and to confirm the members thereof."

So strong, however, was the detestation still felt in the colonies for the memory of Laud, that neither at this time nor at a later date, when, after the death of Butler and Benson, the plan was revived by Secker, then Archbishop of Canterbury, could even so moderate and reasonable a proposal be carried through; and the episcopal congregations in the North American colonies were ultimately driven to seek consecration for their

first bishops, not from the Church of England, but from the Episcopal Church of Scotland.

Besides attending to its affairs during his life, Butler at his death left a legacy of £500 to the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel.

The second, fourth, and sixth sermons are closely allied in their subjects, and may well be discussed together. The first of them, preached before the Right Hon. the Lord Mayor, the Court of Aldermen, the Sheriffs, and the governors of the several hospitals of the city of London, at the Parish Church of St. Bridget, on Monday in Easter week 1740, sets forth the general principles on which the obligations on the part of the rich to charity and almsgiving to the poor rest. In it, after showing how riches gradually emerge in the natural development of society, the bishop proceeds to point out how the possession of riches by one class necessarily puts them in a position of power and influence as towards the poorer classes who are dependent on them. But this position of power and influence inevitably entails corresponding duties. In early days, when the dependants were reckoned as slaves and actual members of the families in whose employ they were, the duties owed towards them could scarcely be overlooked, but these duties remain none the less real and obligatory, though the progress of society has caused a greater separation between class and class. The obligations consist partly in educating the poor in habits of virtue and the principles of religion, partly in setting a good example to them, partly in relieving their necessities when sickness or other misfortune overtakes them. In conclusion, Butler urges that in supporting the public hospitals of London the rich are fulfilling these different obligations in the best and most satisfactory way.

The two other sermons above mentioned, the fourth

and sixth, apply the principles thus laid down to two special departments of duty. In the first of these, preached in the eventful year 1745, on behalf of the "charity schools in and about the cities of London and Westminster," Butler pleads earnestly the cause of the education of the children of the poor. Education meant to him, as it has meant to almost all sensible men, a religious education; and he sees in such an education the best safeguard against the spread of atheism and immorality, by which, like many others of that day, he believed the safety and well-being of the nation to be threatened. Charity schools, as we learn from the sermon itself, were then comparatively a novel institution, and exception seems in many quarters to have been taken to them, on the ground that they educated the children above their station in life, and so tended to make them discontented with their condition. While not positively denying that this might be the result, Butler points out that the public are under a positive obligation to confer such education on these children. This obligation he bases, firstly, on the forlorn condition of poor children, which in itself makes them an object of pity to all right-minded men; and secondly, on the fact that, since children are endowed with an equal capacity for acquiring evil or good habits, it is certain they will drift into the former if they have not the latter instilled into them. Their whole life is necessarily surrounded by many corrupting influences, to which they are only too likely to succumb unless fortified by education against them. Further, he pleads that while the poor law of Elizabeth had made provision that those who were unable to support themselves were not to be allowed to starve, it made no similar provision for the education of children who had either no parents living at all, or whose parents were unable to provide them with the necessary educa-

tion; but for such children education is scarcely less a necessary than is the provision of food for those no longer able to work. To this must be added that the introduction of printing, and the spread of general education which has followed from it, have left those who are unable to obtain an education relatively worse off than they would have been in an age when they would have had to compete with others who were as little educated as themselves; what has been others' gain having proved in this way their loss. Thus it is only fair and just that steps should be taken on this ground alone to redress the balance.

The fear that by education children will be rendered unfit for their station in life he next combats in a number of different ways. In the first place, the rich, he urges, by a good system of moral and religious education, might be rendered more fit for the discharge of those duties which they now so often and so disastrously neglect; but if education could do thus much for those who have so much greater advantages and opportunities, how truly indispensable must it be for those, all the circumstances of whose lives are so much against them?

Or take, again, he continues, the case of children who are not without parents, but whose parents are evil or profligate, how certain is it that such, unless they have some countervailing principles instilled into them, will, by the close association into which they are necessarily brought with their parents, imbibe the same evil habits and practices which they see everywhere around them. On the other hand, the habits of order and discipline which are inculcated at school must do something to mitigate and diminish the evil tendencies from which otherwise such children would suffer, while they are removed, at least for a time, from their evil surroundings. Further, it is proposed, as far as possible, to combine

in these schools instruction in manual crafts with the more purely intellectual education, and care will be taken, as far as possible, to find suitable situations for the children when they leave school. By these means it is hoped that any possible ill-effects there may be in the way of unfitting the children for their normal station in life may be mitigated, if not entirely removed.[1]

To us many of the objections taken to such schools seem frivolous or absurd; but those who can remember how, even as lately as thirty years ago, very similar objections were to be heard against the adoption of any general system of national education, will recognise that it required not a little courage on Butler's part to plead thus boldly and unflinchingly the right of these children to be educated, as it also showed no little insight to perceive that the balance of advantage must lie not on the side of keeping them in ignorance, but on that of supplying them with so much in the way of education and instruction as they were fitted to receive.

As in the Fourth Sermon Butler pleaded the cause of the Charity Schools, so in the Sixth he pleads that of the London Hospitals. Both were causes which he seems to have had very much at heart. In the Second Sermon he had already spoken with pride of the excellent management of the Bristol Infirmary,[2] with which his position as bishop of the diocese had brought him into connection. When he moved to Durham one of his first acts was to become a subscriber to, and advocate the claims of, the then newly founded Newcastle Infirmary. In the picture of him in the possession of Durham University he is painted with the plans of it in his hand. Perhaps his own feeble health made him more awake than others to the obligation of relieving the sufferings of the sick. At anyrate, in this sermon he dwells with much force and eloquence on the obliga-

[1] §§ 19 and 22. [2] § 16 and note.

tions Christians are under not only to charity in general, but to that particular form of it which consists in ministering to the relief of disease and the casualties of the poor. Such assistance can best be given, he urged, by public infirmaries, and in many cases these are the only possible means by which such help can be given at all. But just as objection had been taken, by those who prided themselves on their enlightenment, to charity schools, and the education given in them, so, too, had objection been taken to medical dispensaries. The objections were based, in the first place, on the ground that such institutions tended to do away with the natural penalties which were attached to certain kinds of sin, drunkenness and profligacy, for instance; and secondly, on the supposed tendency of such institutions to deter the poor from making reasonable provision against evils which might be foreseen, and could therefore be met by ordinary prudence. To the first of these objections Butler replies that the rich are not deterred in their own case from making use of such remedies and alleviations as have been discovered for their diseases by the consideration that many of their diseases have been the "natural" results of their own sins and their own follies; and it is clearly unjust to mete out to the poor a severity which we should not think of enforcing against ourselves, or those in the same rank with us. Nor is it possible, again, to distinguish with any approach to accuracy between those evils and diseases which have been brought upon the poor by what properly may be considered their own fault, and those which are due to circumstances over which they have but little, if any, control. But we may go further than this and say with Butler, that the very example of God Himself—Who "is kind to the unthankful and the evil, and sendeth His rain on the just and on the unjust"—should be a warning to us

against too narrowly restricting our charity, a warning which our Lord has expressly enforced. And once more, it is pertinent to observe, that if in some cases diseases and consequent pains are affixed by way of natural deterrents to certain vices and evil courses of behaviour, yet the fact that God has allowed means of mitigating such pains, and of curing such diseases, to be discovered is in itself a proof that He intended such remedies to be used, and such means of mitigation resorted to. Indeed, from one point of view we may say that the whole scheme of Christianity is an instance of how God allows us to escape from the "natural" consequences of our sins and wrong behaviour by the use of means which He has Himself provided. As a set-off to whatever remote mischief might conceivably be done by mitigating the natural consequences of vice, it is to be remembered that infirmaries for the sick poor, if properly conducted, should in themselves prove, in virtue of their religious character, the good order observed in them, and the charity they exhibit, a potent means of moral and religious reformation and improvement; and in many cases they have actually been found to produce such results.

To the objection that the poor are deterred from making adequate provision for themselves by the existence of such infirmaries, it is sufficient, he says, to answer that the wants of the poor are in this respect more than it is in any way possible for them to meet; the very circumstances of their homes make the satisfactory coping with disease an impossibility, and those who maintain the opposite only show that they have no real knowledge of the poor or of their mode of living. The very rule that has to be enforced in almost all hospitals, that none who are suffering from incurable diseases can be received, furnishes in itself a proof how great is the pressure for admission from those who are likely to

be benefited by obtaining it. But a system which is forced to reject, on grounds of humanity, all those who are incurably ill cannot be regarded as satisfactory or adequate. And so the bishop ends with a stirring appeal to all classes to join in so excellent a work, pointing out that all those who contribute anything to the well-being of the community are in a real sense the servants of those to whom they minister; and so, apart from the mere fact of neighbourhood, have special claims on the charity, interest, and sympathy of all other members of the same society.

The two remaining sermons, the Third and Fifth, both of them preached before the House of Lords,—the one on the anniversary of the martyrdom of King Charles I., in the year 1741, the other on the anniversary of the accession of King George II. in the year 1747,—throw some interesting light on Butler's political position and opinions. Both from sentiment and conviction Butler was a convinced supporter of the house of Hanover. His hereditary traditions would naturally incline him to that side, and his reason confirmed what early tradition suggested. For Queen Caroline he seems to have entertained in the latter years of her life a genuine regard, and the feeling would appear to have been reciprocated by the queen herself. After her death these friendly feelings were to a large extent transferred to the king. We have seen how the king selected Butler to preach to him privately after the queen's death, and how deeply he was touched by the sermon that Butler then delivered. It was shortly after this that he raised him to the Bishopric of Bristol; and though Butler seems to have felt the preferment, when the offer was first made to him, inconvenient and inadequate, the king showed his genuine wish to consult his interests by adding to it shortly afterwards the Deanery of St. Paul's. It is said that later on the king pressed on

his acceptance the Archbishopric of Canterbury; and though Butler felt himself, both on account of his general self-depreciation and despondency, and also by reason of his failing health, unable to accept the post,[1] it seems to have been also at the king's desire that the great see of Durham was offered to him. There must have been many sides of the king's conduct which the bishop can by no means have approved; but Butler speaks of him in the latter of these two sermons with genuine warmth as an excellent constitutional sovereign, and denounces with a good deal of severity the exaggerated or unfounded charges which the wits allowed themselves to bring against him as well as against others who were in authority.

The judicial murder of Charles I. Butler denounces as one of those acts in which "liberty" was employed as a "cloak of maliciousness." Those who took part in it were probably, he urges, self-deceived, *i.e.* it was a case in which men represented an obviously wrong act to themselves as something other than it really was; scarcely any tyranny will justify the forcible overthrow of an existing government, so great are the certain and inevitable evils which follow even from the successful execution of such an act; or at anyrate such an overthrow is only justified when those who undertake it see pretty clearly what order of things they propose to substitute for that of which they are planning the subversion; but in the revolution which ended in the execution of Charles I. no such foresight was exercised, and the inevitable result was that there was established in the name of liberty a worse tyranny by far than that which the revolution attempted to get rid of.

The Fifth Sermon derives a good deal of its interest

[1] According to a well-known story, he is said to have declined the post on the ground that it was too late for him to try to support a falling Church.

from the fact that it was preached in 1747, the year which followed the suppression of the rising of 1745. Butler takes for his text those verses from 1 Timothy in which St. Paul exhorts, "that first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; for kings, and all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty."[1] The leading of such a life is, says Butler, what should be our chief aim in our passage through the present world, and this aim can only be satisfactorily attained under a settled and orderly government, under which justice is duly and impartially administered. A constitutional monarchy, he urges, such as exists in England under the present régime, supporting as it does a tolerant and liberal National Church, furnishes the happiest instance of such a government, and gives, therefore, the best security that men may be able to realise the reasonable aim of their life on earth.[2] In the maintenance of such a system (threatened though it was in that day partly by the ever-spreading growth of licentiousness, partly by the wanton and unmeasured attacks levelled at it by thoughtless or mischievous men) Butler saw the surest safeguard alike against the pretensions and encroachments of the Church of Rome, and against that spirit of anarchy and lawlessness which is sure to lead, either directly or in the way of natural reaction, to a revival of superstition and tyranny. Liberty, which if rightly used he regards as one of the greatest of blessings, can only be enjoyed under a government by which wrong is repressed and the rightful claims of all enforced. The recent outbreak under the Pretender should have the effect of making men more conscious of the blessings they enjoy, and more observant of such conduct as shall ensure them these blessings, and guard most effectually against any

[1] 1 Tim. ii. 1, 2. [2] §§ 3 and 5.

attempts, the success of which would infallibly rob them of them.

The offer of the see of Durham came to Butler in July 1750, when he was fifty-eight years old, and apparently direct from the king himself, who was then at Hanover. One motive which influenced him in accepting it was the desire to renew his connection with a part of the country where so many eventful years of his life had been passed, and where he had left behind him many attached friends. His nomination was received in the north with the greatest enthusiasm. There have been preserved the somewhat fulsome document in which the subdean, on the part of the chapter, gave expression to their feelings of pleasure, and the bishop's cordial, but short and dignified, reply to it. Of the feelings with which Butler himself entered on his new duties we have an interesting record in two letters to friends who had written to congratulate him on his promotion. "If," he writes in the first of these, "one is enabled to do a little good and to prefer worthy men, this is indeed a valuable of life, and will afford satisfaction at the close of it; but the change of station in itself will by no means answer the trouble of it, and of getting into new forms of living; I mean, in respect to the peace and happiness of one's own mind, for in fortune, to be sure, it will."[1]

"I thank you for your kind congratulations," he writes to another friend, "though I am not without my doubts and fears, how far the occasion of them is a real subject for congratulation to me. Increase of fortune is insignificant to one who thought he had enough before; and I foresee many difficulties in the station I am coming into, and no advantage worth thinking of, except some greater power of being serviceable to others; and whether this be an advantage entirely depends on the

[1] Steere's *Memoir*, pp. xl, xli.

use one shall make of it; I pray God it may be a good one. It would be a melancholy thing in the close of life to have no reflections to entertain one's self with, but that one had spent the revenues of the Bishopric of Durham in a sumptuous course of living, and enriched one's friends with the promotions of it, instead of having really set one's self to do good and promote worthy men; yet this right use of fortune and power is more difficult than the generality of even good people think, and requires both a guard upon oneself and a strength of mind to withstand solicitations greater (I wish I may not find it) than I am master of."[1]

The government proposed to make certain arrangements as conditions of his translation. They proposed to separate the Lord-Lieutenancy from the bishopric, and they wished to make a bargain with him, that if his friend Secker were nominated as his successor in the Deanery of St. Paul's, then he should undertake to nominate Dr. Chapman to the stall in Durham Cathedral, which Secker's promotion would leave vacant. Butler, however, flatly refused to accept the bishopric with any conditions attached to his acceptance; he was unwilling that the dignity of the see should suffer any diminution as the result of his appointment, while the disposal of preferment he regarded as a sacred trust, and so held that it would be absolutely wrong to make any bargains respecting it. He was bound, he thought, to appoint to any post the man whom, all things considered, he regarded as best qualified to fill it.[2] Owing to the king's absence in Hanover a good deal of time was spent in these negotiations and in other necessary arrangements, and it appears from the bishop's diary that he did not actually move to Bishop-Auckland till the early part of the next year.

[1] Steere's *Memoir*, p. xli.

[2] Gladstone, vol. ii., Appendix; letter to the Duke of Newcastle.

Of his impressions of the place, of the plans he had formed, and the occupations which filled his time, we have an interesting record in a letter written by him this year to the Duchess of Somerset:—

"I had a mind to see Auckland before I wrote to your Grace, and as you take so kind a part in everything which contributes to my satisfaction, I am sure you will be pleased to hear that the place is a very agreeable one, and fully answering expectations, except that one of the chief prospects, which is very pretty (the River Wear, with hills much diversified rising above it) is too bare of wood; the park not much amiss as to that, but I am obliged to pale it anew all round, the old pale being quite decayed. This will give an opportunity, with which I am much pleased, to take in forty or fifty acres competently wooded, though with that enlargement it will scarcely be sufficient for the hospitality of the country. These, with some little improvements and very great repairs, take up my leisure time.

"Thus, Madam, I seem to have laid out a very long life for myself; yet, in reality, everything I see puts me in mind of the shortness and uncertainty of it: the arms and inscriptions of my predecessors, what they did and what they neglected, and (from accidental circumstances) the very place itself, and the rooms I walk through and sit in. And when I consider in one view the many things of the kind I have just mentioned, which I have upon my hands, I feel the burlesque of being employed in this manner at my time of life. But, in another view, and taking in all circumstances, these things, as trifling as they may appear, no less than things of greater importance, seem to be put upon me to do, or at least to begin; whether I am to live to complete any or all of them is not my concern."[1]

The following is a contemporary account given of him at this time:[2] "He was of a most reverent aspect,

[1] Steere's *Memoir*, p. xlii. [2] Surtees' *History of Durham*.

his face thin and pale, but there was a divine placidness in his countenance which inspired veneration and expressed the most benevolent mind; his white hair hung gracefully on his shoulders, and his whole figure was patriarchal. During the short time he held the see he conciliated all hearts. In advanced years, and on the episcopal throne, he retained the same genuine modesty and native sweetness of disposition which had distinguished him in youth and in retirement. During the ministerial performance of the sacred office a divine animation seemed to pervade his whole manner, and lighted up his pale, wan countenance, already marked with the progress of disease,—like a torch glimmering in its socket, but bright and useful to the last." He managed to combine an open-handed and even princely hospitality with much simplicity in his private life. He kept open house three days a week at Durham or Bishop-Auckland, as the case might be, and at other times was to be found supping alone on a simple joint and a pudding. While he spent considerable sums on the repair and improvement of his palace, as he had already done at Bristol,—a work which, as we gather from his letter to the Duchess of Somerset, he regarded as necessary,—his liberality to external objects was also munificent; he subscribed, from the outset of his episcopate, £400 a year to the Newcastle Infirmary, and on one occasion gave £500, all the money he had at the time in the house, to some object which he approved, the claims of which had been brought before him.

He held the bishopric for scarcely two years. The one event by which his episcopate was distinguished was the delivery of his celebrated *Durham Charge*, delivered at his primary visitation of the diocese in 1751. In this, after pointing to the decay of religion as a generally admitted fact, so that while "different ages have been distinguished by different sorts of particular errors and vices, the deplorable distinction of ours is an avowed

scorn of religion in some, and a growing disregard of it in the generality,"[1] he proceeds to ask what can be done to arrest a decay which is thus general and generally admitted? How, in the first place, should the clergy act when they are brought face to face with objections which "sceptical and profane men are extremely apt to bring up at meetings of entertainment, and such as are of the freest sort; innocent ones, I mean, for otherwise I do not suppose you would be present at them?"[2]

The advice which he gives is to avoid, as far as may be, public discussions at such gatherings. Partly, religion is, he urges, too serious a matter to be made the hackney subject on such occasions; and by preventing its being made so, the clergy will better secure the reverence that is due to it than by entering over-readily into its defence; partly, people are too apt "inconsiderately to take for granted that things are really questionable because they hear them often disputed; and an objection may be put in a short compass which it may take a long and closely connected argument to answer—one which it would be impossible adequately to state, still more to get properly attended to in a cursory conversation."[3] At the same time, he warns them "that they must be very particularly on their guard that they may not seem, by way of compliance, to join in with any levity of discourse concerning religion; nor would one let any pretended argument against it pass entirely without notice, nor any gross ribaldry upon it, without expressing one's entire disapprobation. This last may sometimes be done by silence; for silence is sometimes very expressive, as was that of our Blessed Saviour before the Sanhedrim and before Pilate."[4]

A clergyman's primary concern, however, he continues, is not with strangers or with chance acquaintances, but with his own people; and it is consequently to the methods to be adopted in dealing with them that the

[1] *Charge*, § 2. [2] § 4. [3] § 5. [4] § 9.

bishop next directs his remarks. Even here, he does not recommend the preaching of sermons of a directly controversial or polemical character. Such discourses are apt to raise more doubts than they lay; and, in any case, are quite inappropriate to times of devotion and worship. "Nor does the want of religion in the generality of the common people appear to be owing to a speculative belief or denial of it, but chiefly to thoughtlessness and the common temptations of life." The chief business of the clergy, therefore, is "to endeavour to beget a practical sense of religion upon their hearts, as what they acknowledge their belief of, and profess they ought to conform themselves to." "And this is to be done by keeping up, as we are able, the form and face of religion with decency and reverence, and in such a degree as to bring the thoughts of religion often to their minds; and then endeavouring to make this form more and more subservient, to promote the reality and power of it."[1] After observing how much the Mahometans and Roman Catholics gained by having stated hours of prayer and devotion, and by having religion recalled to their thoughts by some ceremony or rite presented to their senses, "our reformers," he continues, "reduced the form of religion to great simplicity, and enjoined no more particular rules, nor left anything more of what was external in religion, than was in a manner necessary to preserve a sense of religion itself upon the minds of the people. But a great deal of this is neglected by the generality amongst us; for instance, the service of the Church, not only upon common days, but also upon saints' days; and several other things might be mentioned."[2] The result of this neglect of external religion, he urges, has too often been that religion itself has fallen into decay; and it has become in consequence highly seasonable to instruct the people to pay attention to such matters, not to neglect the fabric of the churches

[1] *Charge*, § 12. [2] § 14.

(which it belongs to the laity to maintain in repair and good order); and, above all, to attend at least on Sundays to the services which the clergy are bound to conduct reverently and decently. Further, family prayers, stated times for private prayer, grace at meals, should be inculcated as duties; and the careful education of children by their parents, particularly in religion, should be insisted on. Above all, he would have all the clergy improve such occasions as may present themselves for imparting special instruction,—the greater festivals, incidental solemnities, private intercourse, the crises of life. Preparation for confirmation and for first communion furnish special opportunities of which no clergyman, anxious to do his best for his people, will fail to avail himself. "To do all this—to do this but to keep a sense of religion in their own minds, and to promote the practice of it in others—is at once the special business, duty, and happiness of the clergy, and also will furnish the securest barrier against the threatened advance of infidelity."

A charge so outspoken as this, delivered in the eighteenth century by a bishop so prominent as Butler, could scarcely fail to produce a profound impression, and controversy seems to to have been almost immediately aroused by it.

A certain Archdeacon Blackburn published in 1752 an anonymous pamphlet, entitled *A Serious Inquiry into the Use and Importance of External Religion*, which was intended as a direct answer to the *Charge*; and some years later, in 1767, there appeared, after the bishop's death, a further pamphlet, also anonymous, under the title of *The Roots of Protestant Errors Examined.* In this the author stated that by an anecdote lately given him the same prelate (whom he designates in a note as B—p of D—m) is said to have died in the communion of a Church "that makes use of saints, saints' days, and all the trumpery of saints' worship." This

unprovoked assault on the memory of his friend drew into the field Archbishop Secker as his defender, who in a short letter, subscribed Misopseudes, addressed to the *St. James' Chronicle* on May 9th, called upon the writer to produce his evidence for publishing so gross and scandalous a falsehood. The challenge was promptly accepted. The author of the pamphlet, signing himself Phileleutheros, reasserts that such anecdote had been certainly given him, "and that he was yet of opinion that there was nothing improbable in it, when it is considered that the same prelate put up the popish insignia of the cross in his chapel when at Bristol, and in his last episcopal charge has squinted very much towards that superstition." To this renewed attack the archbishop again replied. After citing various passages from his writings to prove how strongly Butler had condemned the pretensions of the Church of Rome, particularly in his sermon preached before the House of Lords, Secker continues: "Now, he was universally esteemed throughout his life as a man of strict piety and honesty, as well as uncommon abilities. He gave all the proofs, public and private, which his station led him to give, and they were decisive and daily, of his continuing to the last a sincere member of the Church of England. Nor had any of his acquaintance or most intimate friends, nor have they to this day, the least doubt of it." [1]

This reply of Secker's disposed of the question as far as the original pamphleteer was concerned; but a short time afterwards another letter appeared in the *St. James' Chronicle* in which the writer, after appealing to the cross in the chapel at Bristol and the expressions in the *Charge* as strong proof of attachment on Butler's part to the Church of Rome, attempts to account for the bishop's leaning in that direction. This he sets down to the "natural melancholy and gloominess of Dr. Butler's

[1] Bartlett's *Memoirs of Bishop Butler*, p. 154.

disposition; to his great fondness for the lives of Romish saints and their books of mystic piety; to his drawing his notions of teaching men religion not from the New Testament but from philosophical and political opinions of his own; and above all, to his transition from a strict Dissenter among the Presbyterians to a rigid Churchman, and his sudden and unexpected elevation to great wealth and dignity in the Church."[1] To this second attack Secker once more replied, pointing out that the natural melancholy of the bishop's temper would rather have fixed him among his first friends, than prompted him to the change he made; that he read books of all sorts, as well as books of mystic piety, and knew how to pick the good that was in them out of the bad; that his opinions were exposed without reserve in his *Analogy* and his sermons; and if the doctrine of either be popish or unscriptural, the learned world hath mistaken strangely in admiring both: that instead of being a strict Dissenter, he never was a communicant in any Dissenting assembly; on the contrary, he went occasionally from his earliest years to the established worship and became a constant conformist to it when he was barely of age, and entered himself in 1714 of Oriel College; that his elevation to great dignity in the Church, far from being sudden or unexpected, was a gradual and natural rise; that as Bishop of Durham he had very little authority beyond his brethren, and in ecclesiastical matters had none beyond them; great wealth he had, but this he had spent for purposes of charity and in repairing his houses.[2]

The controversy was a foolish one, and ought never to have been raised; but it is interesting from two points of view. In the first place, it well illustrates how apart, in his life and modes of thinking, Butler was from his own time, and how little, in spite of having made him a bishop, his own time understood him. To a shallow and self-seeking age he seemed a veritable marvel of

[1] Bartlett, pp. 155, 156. [2] *Ibid.* pp. 156, 157.

melancholy and unselfishness. Then, again, the details which Secker supplies from his own personal knowledge, and speaking as Butler's most intimate friend, give us more vivid insight into certain sides of Butler's character than can be derived from any other source. It is to be observed that Secker dwells on, as features in his character, that same simplicity, sincerity, and entire truthfulness which are so conspicuous in his writings. It is also interesting to notice with what confidence he speaks of these writings themselves as having already established an unquestioned reputation in the opinion of the learned world.

Butler died within a year from the delivery of his *Charge*, and within two years of his translation to Durham. Some details of his last illness are preserved in letters which his chaplain, Dr. Nathaniel Forster, and his friend Bishop Benson, wrote to Secker, who, too ill to visit his friend himself, was anxious for constant news of his closing hours. Butler's illness grew very rapidly upon him. The waters of Clifton were first tried, but without effect. Then he moved to Bath, but the waters of Bath proved no more efficacious than those of Clifton; and at Bath he died after a stay there of little more than a fortnight. Here he was visited, at no little personal inconvenience and risk, by his friend Bishop Benson, of whom he took a touching and affectionate farewell. The effort of the journey and the agitation of mind caused by taking leave of his friend seem to have hastened Benson's own death. He outlived Butler only a few months, and Bishop Berkeley too died in the same year. For the rest, Butler seems to have died very much as he had lived—with a hesitating but unbroken faith, with simple and quiet, if somewhat melancholy, resignation and fortitude. He died, too, as he had lived, very much alone, alone with his own thoughts and God. He was buried, as became the man,

very quietly and with no state, in his earlier cathedral of Bristol. His funeral was attended simply by his own near relatives and his household. "The pall," writes Dr. Forster to Secker, "was supported by the chancellor, Dr. Waterland, and four others of the senior clergy who were most known to his lordship, and followed by myself and the rest of the family in the same order in which we usually attended his lordship to the cathedral at Durham"—the last a picturesque and illustrative trait.

If we try to sum up the characteristics of the man which his life seems to disclose, we observe at once that these characteristics appear far less clearly marked in his life than they do in his writings. This is only natural, for in his writings his life culminated; and though he is never, as we have seen,[1] egotistical, never mentions himself and what only concerns himself, he is always personal. A writer so transparently single-hearted and so scrupulously honest as Butler was, can scarcely fail to be this. He lets you see, and cannot help doing so, what are his deepest convictions, his strongest motives, his most enduring affections, his keenest interests; in a less degree what are his prevailing dislikes and repulsions. He is on such points absolutely frank with his reader, and feels the strongest obligation to be nothing less. He never plays with his subject, never disguises, never holds back, never writes for effect. All is the sincere outcome of an honest and scrupulous mind, set out with all possible care, circumspection, and self-restraint. The style, the laboured but carefully chosen words, the cumbrous sentences, adequately and faithfully reflect the inward thought; and so, as we read the writings, we feel with absolute conviction that we know the man. What then was he like,—how shall we describe him?

1. That which has struck all critics alike as the

[1] Above, p. 1.

dominant note of his character was absolute and supreme conscientiousness. The supremacy of conscience was no mere theory with him; it was a truth carried into practice in every detail of life and conduct. When conscience had pronounced, the final word with him had been said. He obeyed its dictates with scrupulous and exact observance, for his conscience was to him nothing less than the awful and venerable voice of God Himself. And so with him conscience had no less "power" than "authority," no less "strength" than "right." But as in all very conscientious men, so with him, this absolute predominance of conscience was inevitably accompanied by a certain scrupulosity, fearfulness, and melancholy. The consciousness of sin becomes acute in such characters, and their conduct is even more regulated by the fear of God than animated by the love of Him. They live in constant dread that they may give offence, that they may fall short of that which their delicate and scrupulous conscience requires of them. Something of this kind we observe in Butler. He walked as he wrote, warily and circumspectly. He seems ever afraid to give offence,—not to give offence to man, but to God, and to God's vicegerent, the voice of conscience, within him.

2. Next to his conscientiousness we should place among Butler's most marked characteristics the intensity of his religious convictions. The two were indeed, as Mr. Bagehot has observed, most intimately connected; for Butler, more than most thinkers, approached religion directly from the side of conscience. He believed implicitly in the existence and supremacy of God, because he at once trusted and obeyed the evidence of his conscience; and his conscience spoke to him in unmistakable tones of God as judge and the perfect embodiment of that moral law whose awful dictates it apprehended and interpreted. To some extent, no doubt, Butler's religious beliefs were coloured and in-

fluenced by their origin in conscience. It gave to them that prevailing tone of reverent fear, of awful apprehension, of anxious and even melancholy scrupulosity, of all that the Greeks meant by the term "eulabeia," which Mr. Bagehot[1] has again happily noted as characteristic alike of his life and writings, and which makes "resignation" hold with him the primary place in man's rightful attitude towards God. Yet it is easy to exaggerate this aspect of his faith. No one can read the two sermons on the Love of God in particular, or the chapter on the Atonement in the second part of the *Analogy*, without seeing that if the fear of God was with him the beginning of wisdom, still fear was in the end transcended by, and transmuted into, love. What can be finer or more inspiriting, for instance, than the noble description at the end of the second of these Sermons of what the happiness of heaven may consist in?—when we shall see not only the *effects* of power, wisdom, and greatness, "but the qualities themselves in the Supreme Being may be the immediate objects of contemplation"; "when the spirits of just men made perfect may have a real view of that righteousness which is an everlasting righteousness; of the conformity of the divine will to the law of truth, in which the moral law consists; of that goodness in the sovereign Mind which gave birth to the universe; add, what will be true of all good men hereafter, a consciousness of having an interest in what they are contemplating; suppose them able to say, 'This God is our God for ever and ever,'—would they be any longer to seek for what is their chief happiness, their final good? Could the utmost stretch of their capacities look further?"[2] And again: "As our capacities of perception improve we shall have, perhaps by some faculty entirely new, a perception of God's presence

[1] *Literary Studies*, vol. iii., Essay IV. p. 116. [2] Sermon XIV. § 17.

with us in a nearer and stricter way; since it is certain He is more intimately present with us than anything else can be. Proof of the existence and presence of any being is quite different from the immediate perception, the consciousness of it. What, then, will be the joy of heart which His presence, and 'the light of His countenance,' Who is the life of the universe, will inspire good men with, when they shall have a sensation that He is the sustainer of their being, that they exist in Him; when they shall feel His influence to cheer and enliven and support their frame, in a manner of which we have now no conception? He will be in a literal sense their strength and their portion for ever."[1] Could the affection which the human heart is capable of feeling towards the Divine nature and the Divine love be more eloquently and even passionately expressed? is there anything more soul-stirring and uplifting in the *Imitatio* itself?

It was this deep-seated and even enthusiastic religious feeling and conviction which made Butler such a curious contrast to the general temper and prevailing sentiment of his time, so that his career and its remarkable success fill us even with a certain sense of incongruity and surprise. While others, who held religious beliefs, held them, or flattered themselves that they held them, as the result of an elaborate and sustained reasoning process; while God for them seems to exist, as Mr. Pattison pithily puts it, mainly in order that He might be "proved," with Butler it is far otherwise, God is for him a reality, and the greatest of realities, a Being about whose existence it is as little possible to doubt as it is about one's own existence, for He is one who is not only apprehended by the intellect, but far more also by the conscience, the affections, and the heart, —an object of devotion and worship as well as, and even far more than, an object of speculation and

[1] Sermon XIV, 18.

belief. That such a man, in such an age, should have been made a bishop, and made a bishop without question and without cavil, is surely a strong testimony to the respect, and even half-extorted admiration, which honest and unaffected piety will always command.

3. But we should be mistaking Bishop Butler and misrepresenting him did we not recognise the supremacy which he, in common with his countrymen at large, assigned to reason. He will not for a moment dethrone or belittle it. "I express myself with caution," he says,[1] "lest I should be mistaken to vilify reason, which is indeed the only faculty we have wherewith to judge concerning anything, even revelation itself." And again: "It is shown, that, upon supposition of a Divine revelation, the analogy of nature renders it beforehand highly credible, I think probable, that many things in it must appear liable to great objections; and that we must be incompetent judges of it to a great degree. This observation is, I think, unquestionably true, and of the very utmost importance: but it is urged, as I hope it will be understood, with great caution of not vilifying the faculty of reason, which is 'the candle of the Lord within us,' though it can afford no light where it does not shine; nor judge, where it has no principles to judge upon."[2] His quarrel with his contemporaries was not that they exalted reason, but that they exalted it unduly; that they extolled its authority, not as they ought to have done, when working subject to, and in accordance with, the evidence of facts, but even when enunciating conclusions that were independent of facts, or, worse still, opposed to them: that they pushed it into regions into which it had no right to intrude, and made it responsible for conclusions which it had no adequate data for arriving at. But to reason, properly schooled and duly limited, no one yields a more loyal

[1] *Analogy*, II. iii. § 3. [2] *Ibid.* ix. § 7.

and uncomplaining submission. "Let reason be kept to; and if any part of the scripture account of the redemption of the world by Christ can be shown to be really contrary to it, let the scripture, in the name of God, be given up: but let not such poor creatures as we go on objecting against an infinite scheme, that we do not see the necessity or usefulness of all its parts, and call this reasoning; and, which still further heightens the absurdity in the present case, parts which we are not actively concerned in."[1]

4. Closely connected with all the foregoing characteristics was that which has seemed to many writers the most distinctive and remarkable of them all—his uncompromising and unstinted devotion to truth and fact. It is this which above all his other qualities has commended him to minds so different as those of Mr. Gladstone, Dean Church, Mr. Leslie Stephen. It is this intense desire to be absolutely true to thought and fact which is the secret of the badness and difficulty, but also of the strength and effectiveness, of his style. He will leave nothing out, no qualification, no reservation, no after-thought, by which his meaning can be rendered more exact and truthful; he prefers to understate rather than overstate his case; every objection which is a real objection is to be met, and its due weight and proper place assigned to it; a doctrine, if proved, is not to be rejected even though it may seem that unacceptable consequences may be drawn from it. "For, after all, that which is true must be admitted, though it should show us the shortness of our faculties, and that we are in no wise judges of many things of which we are apt to think ourselves very competent ones." "Things and actions are what they are, and the consequences of them will be what they will be; why, then, should we desire to be de-

[1] *Analogy*, II. v. § 24.

ceived?"[1] "As we cannot remove from this earth, or change our general business on it, so neither can we alter our real nature. Therefore no exercise of the mind can be recommended, but only the exercise of those faculties you are conscious of."[2] Quotations of this sort might be almost indefinitely multiplied from his writings. But it is quite needless; no one has ever read his works with any attention and then doubted their sincerity and careful truthfulness. It is just this quality in them, the resolute determination to state things as they are, neither more nor less; to shut his eyes willingly to no fact, whether it makes immediately for or against his position; to ignore no real consideration which should have weight in determining the issue; to pass over no objection or difficulty, which is a real objection and a true difficulty; never to overstate a fact or unduly press an argument; which has made his writings, difficult though they usually are, sometimes even obscure and repellent, the most popular and the best used storehouse of apologetics in the English language.

Two epitaphs were composed on Butler. The first, written immediately after his death by Dr. N. Forster, his chaplain and executor, ran as follows:—

H. S.
Reverendus admodum in Christo Pater
Josephus Butler, LL.D.
Hujusce primo Diœceseos
Deinde Dunelmensis Episcopus.
Qualis quantusque vir erat
Sua libentissime agnovit Ætas;
Et si quid Præsuli aut scriptori ad famam valent
Mens altissima, ingenii perspicacis et subacti vis,
Animusque pius, simplex, candidus, liberalis,
Mortui haud facile evanescet memoria.
Obiit Bathoniæ
xvi. Kal Jul. A.D. 1752
Annos natus LX.

[1] Sermon VII. § 16. [2] Sermon XIII. § 14.

The other was composed by Southey when, in 1834, a more elaborate and suitable monument was erected to him. It reads as follows:—

Sacred
To the memory
of
JOSEPH BUTLER, D.C.L.,
Twelve years Bishop of this Diocese,
and
Afterwards Bishop of Durham,
Whose mortal part is deposited
In the choir of this Cathedral.
Others had established
The historical and prophetical ground
Of the Christian religion,
and
That sure testimony of its truth,
Which is found in the perfect adaptation
To the heart of man.
It was reserved for him to develope
Its analogy to the Constitution
And Course of Nature;
And laying his strong foundations
In the depth of that great argument,
There to construct
Another and irrefragable proof.
Thus rendering Philosophy
Subservient to Faith;
And finding in outward and visible thing
The type and evidence
Of those within the veil.
Born A.D. 1692. Died 1752.

"He who believes the Scripture
To have proceeded from Him who is the
Author of Nature, may well expect
To find the same sort of difficulties
In it as are found in the constitution
Of Nature."

Origen, *Philocal.* p. 23.

CHAPTER II

MORAL PRACTICE AND MORAL THEORY IN ENGLAND IN THE FIRST HALF OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

BUTLER'S life extended from A.D. 1692 to 1752. His boyhood thus falls in the reigns of William and Mary, and Queen Anne, while his manhood covers nearly the reigns of the first two Georges. He began to preach his sermons at the Rolls in 1718, four years after the accession of George I.; he died in 1752, eight years before George III. came to the throne. It is difficult to summarise the characteristics of a time; but the period covered by the reigns of the first two Georges has certain clearly marked features of its own which most historians have not failed to recognise. It may be described as a sort of back-water from the main stream of English history, a period when the national life, though contented and prosperous, ran sluggishly or even seemed to stagnate altogether; and just as stagnant waters do not fail to gather on their surface a film of corruption and noxious weeds, so this time was marked by the prevalence of much sordid vice, great selfishness, great triviality. It was an age materially prosperous, contented, and calm, one which prided itself on its enlightenment and its devotion to reason; but it was a time of shrunken ideals, of narrowed views, of heartless profession,—a day of small things, one which was content and even proud to have it so. "The slightest observation," says a contemporary

writer, "if attended by impartiality, may convince us that the character of the manners of this age and nation is by no means that of abandoned wickedness and profligacy, rather the age is a time of vain, luxurious, and selfish effeminacy."[1] "It is commonly observed," says Bishop Butler, "that there is a disposition in men to complain of the viciousness and corruption of the age in which they live, as greater than that of former ones; which is usually followed by this further observation, that mankind has been in that respect much the same in all times. Now, not to determine whether this last be not contradicted by the accounts of history; thus much can scarce be doubted, that vice and folly take different turns, and some particular kinds of it are more open and avowed in some ages than in others: and I suppose it may be spoken of as very much the distinction of the present to confess a contracted spirit, and greater regards to self-interest, than appears to have been done formerly."[2]

There were various causes which combined to produce such a result. The seventeenth century had been an age of great tension of feeling, of great enthusiasms for great causes. Men had fought, and felt themselves to be fighting, for great issues which they believed to be at stake; loyalty was the watchword of the one party, liberty of the other; but either side was willing to surrender even life itself in a cause which they believed to be sacred and knew to be noble. But after effort and sustained enthusiasm there come, by what seems almost a natural law, languor and reaction; and men wonder how their fathers were willing to bleed for causes which, now that faith in them has departed, seem valueless and almost meaningless. Self-sacrifice in

[1] Dr. John Brown's *Estimate of the Manners and Principles of the Times*, vol. i. § 5.

[2] Sermon XI. § 1.

such an age can be justified only by the expectation of immediate reward; to be held guilty of enthusiasm is no longer a virtue, but the worst crime with which you can bespatter your adversary.

There was another cause. The civil war had ended in the triumph of the Puritans; and the Protectorate, set up as a result of this triumph, had attempted to force upon the nation a form of faith alien to its temper, and a standard of morals of a strictness and austerity altogether beyond its endurance. The consequence was that with the Restoration there set in a period of unbridled reaction. Licentiousness ran riot; the evil fashion set by the court was only too readily followed by the mass of the people. The virtues and even the decencies of life were neglected; excess and profligacy were rampant. The reign of Charles II. makes almost the darkest page in English history. But with the accession of William and Mary a counter reaction set in. Englishmen, seeing the ill effects which previous excesses had had on the fortunes of the nation, began to recognise the error of their ways, and an enlightened selfishness, less actively harmful but scarcely morally better, took the place of the earlier unrestrained self-indulgence. Those who had before abandoned themselves to every whim of caprice now prided themselves on being directed by reason alone, and the dictates of a reasonable self-interest were accepted as the proper guide of life. Men plumed themselves on the possession of "a roundabout common sense," to use a phrase of Locke's; and would rise to no heights, if they would descend to no depths, which this would not justify. And not only did they profess to be actuated solely by such motives in their own conduct: they derided all who did otherwise. Any pretensions to loftier motives or a more exalted standard were branded as hypocrisy, or denounced as folly. The majority would

recognise no virtue higher or more exalted than their own.

The very material prosperity which the country enjoyed—a prosperity so marked that historians from Hallam downwards have described this time as the very heyday of the good fortune of the working classes—may have contributed in the same direction. Comfort came to be regarded as the end of life; and men in their pursuit of that grew lost to all higher or worthier objects.

While such was the general temper of the times, the prevailing motives told differently on the different classes, and in different degrees. The higher classes were probably the greatest offenders. Dr. Brown, in the work already referred to, expressly states that this was the case; and Butler in several passages seems also to imply the same. Not only among them were frivolity, passionate devotion to dress (in which men no less than women shared), gluttony and drinking, gambling and every form of senseless ostentation, pushed to their greatest lengths, but it was chiefly in polite society that that general scoffing temper and contempt of religion, which passed it by with an epigram or a gibe, most widely prevailed. This was the temper of which Butler so loudly complains, of which he can scarcely write with patience. It is this that he has in his mind when he writes: "We find many professedly to reject both — *i.e.* both natural religion and Christianity—upon speculative principles of infidelity. And all of them do not content themselves with a bare neglect of religion, and enjoying their imaginary freedom from its restraints. Some go much beyond this. They deride God's moral government over the world. They renounce His protection and defy His justice. They ridicule and vilify Christianity, and blaspheme the Author of it; and take all occasions to manifest a scorn and contempt of revelation. This amounts to an

active setting themselves against religion, to what may be considered as a positive principle of irreligion which they cultivate within themselves. . . . And others, who are not chargeable with all this profligateness, yet are in avowed opposition to religion, as if discovered to be groundless."[1] Or again: "It is come, I know not how, to be taken for granted by many persons, that Christianity is not so much as a subject of inquiry; but it is now at length discovered to be fictitious. And accordingly they treat it as if, in the present age, this were an agreed point among all people of discernment; and nothing remained but to set it up as a principal subject of mirth and ridicule, as it were by way of reprisals, for its having so long interrupted the pleasures of the world."[2] And he begins his last *Charge* thus: "It is impossible for me, my brethren, upon our first meeting of this kind, to forbear lamenting with you the general decay of religion in this nation; which is now observed by every one, and has been for some time the complaint of all serious persons. The influence of it is more and more wearing out of the minds of men, even of those who do not pretend to enter into speculations on this subject; but the number of those who do, and profess themselves unbelievers, increases, and with their numbers their zeal. Zeal, it is natural to ask,—for what? Why, truly *for* nothing, but *against* everything that is good and sacred amongst us."[3]

This prevailing spirit of contemptuous disregard of religion, of narrow-minded selfishness, frivolity, and levity, produced disastrous consequences in other directions also. Music, literature, architecture, all the higher arts languished, or were degraded, or sank into a condition of artificial triviality. So much time was occupied by dress and the emptiest conventionalities of society that men found neither time nor inclination for

[1] *Analogy*, II. ix. § 5. [2] *Ibid.* I. Advert. § 2. [3] *Charge*, § 1.

any serious reading. Whatever could not be treated by an epigram failed to command interest or to be regarded as worth discussion. Even Bolingbroke's writings, unorthodox as they were, were too long and too serious to command attention, and consequently they fell flat. Pamphlets were the order of the day; pamphlets in which spicy personal abuse took the place of serious discussion, and epigrams that of argument. Nor did the evil confine itself to words. Bands of well-dressed and well-born youths (Mohawks they styled themselves), recognising no law but their own wantonness and caprice, paraded the streets of London at night, beating, and inflicting other outrages on, respectable and quiet citizens, till no decent woman would venture abroad, without necessity, after dark; and those whose occupations took them forth were constantly insulted or met even with worse treatment. So certain is it that, when men have lost their faith in ideals of religion and patriotism, and recognise nothing higher than self-interest or trivial caprice, the strong will oppress the weak, and those who have the power will invade the rights and destroy the peace and comfort of those less happily circumstanced than themselves.

Things were better with the middle classes. At anyrate, there was among them less outward contempt for religion, less frivolity, less licence. But the desire for material comfort and well-being was as strong in them as in their social superiors; nor was there less of that contracted spirit which could see in such comfort the only good, and which subjected all other interests to those of wealth and prosperity. Probably the commercial temper, to the widespread predominance of which Dr. Brown attributes so many of the evils of his day, ruled this class more absolutely than it did any other. One curious result of this is to be seen in the fact that, while the adherents of the Hanoverian dynasty

were to be found chiefly among the commercial classes of the towns, at the time of the Highland rising in 1745, these classes, except in London, scarcely put out a hand to resist the movement, even though its success must have meant a Stuart restoration. Yet, in spite of their selfishness and narrowness of mind, Butler himself bears witness to the fact that among them was to be found no small part of the virtue and integrity of the nation. "The improvement of trade and commerce has," he says, "made another change just hinted at, and, I think, a very happy one, in the state of the world, as it has enlarged the middle rank of people; many of which are, in good measure, free from the vices of the highest and lowest part of mankind."[1] On the whole, it would seem that, though this class, in common with the rest of the nation, was wanting in high ideals or moral earnestness, it was pre-eminently characterised by sobriety and common sense, and clung to a religion which, if of a cold and rational sort, had some power as a controlling and restraining force on character and conduct. While sharing in the general horror of enthusiasm, it was willing to admit so much of religion as could be shown to be rational. The deistical writers would seem to have found the chief part of their audience among the rich and leisured classes; it was for their benefit that their epigrams against religion and their demonstrations of the sufficiency of reason were mainly composed. On the other hand, Butler's cautious arguments as to the narrowness of the powers of the human mind, and the consequent wisdom, where the matter seemed to be doubtful, of throwing in one's lot with that side which could make out the more probable case for itself, appealed with great force to those who possessed in strong measure the middle-class qualities of carefulness and canniness.

[1] *O. S. S.*, ii. § 5.

With respect to the condition of the lower orders, our evidence is by no means so complete as we could wish. Most writers seem to draw a somewhat sharp contrast between the town and the country population,—much in favour of the latter. We gather from Butler that both the distinction between classes was much more clearly marked than it is at present, and the interval between them greater; that, as a consequence, the poor were dependent upon the rich, and directly influenced by them, more than they are now. How exaggerated would the following language, for instance, appear if applied to the condition of our own times: "The lower rank of mankind go on, for the most part, in some tract of living, into which they got by direction or example; and to this their understanding and discourse, as well as labour, are greatly confined. Their opinions of persons and things they take upon trust. Their behaviour has very little in it original, or of home growth; very little which may not be traced up to the influence of others, and less which is not capable of being changed by such influence. Then, as God has made plentiful provision for all His creatures, the wants of all, even of the poorest, might be supplied, so far as it is fit they should, by a proper distribution of it. This being the condition of the lower part of mankind, consider now what influence, as well as power, their superiors must, from the nature of the case, have over them. For they can instil instruction, and recommend it in a peculiar manner by their example, and enforce it still further with favour and discouragement of various kinds. And experience shows that they do direct and change the course of the world as they please. Not only the civil welfare, but the morals and religion of their fellow-creatures greatly depend on them: much more, indeed, than they would, if the common people were not greatly wanting to their duty. All

this is evidently true of superiors in general; superiors in riches, authority, and understanding taken together. And need I say how much of this whole superiority goes along with riches?"[1] In another sermon, that preached "On behalf of the Children in the Charity Schools in and about the Cities of London and Westminster," he traces this condition of dependence, which the lower classes stand in to the higher, as being mainly due to the immense disparity in learning and education which prevailed between the two—a disparity which had been increased rather than diminished by the invention of printing, and the general diffusion of knowledge among the educated which had come from the use of books.[2] This disparity there was a great inclination on the part of some of the well-to-do to maintain; either because they thought that ignorance would keep the common people more dutiful and in a greater state of subjection, or because consciousness in the poor of their own inferiority seemed likely to enhance the influence of the educated and the rich. Against both these thoroughly selfish arguments Butler nobly protests. "Nor let people of rank flatter themselves that ignorance will keep their inferiors more dutiful and in greater subjection to them; for surely there must be danger that it will have a contrary effect, under a free government such as ours, and in a dissolute age. Indeed, the principles and manners of the poor as to virtue and religion will always be greatly influenced, as they always have been, by the example of their superiors, if that would mend the matter. And this influence will, I suppose, be greater if they are kept more inferior than formerly in all knowledge and improvement. But unless their superiors of the present age —superiors, I mean, of the middle as well as higher ranks in society—are greater examples of public spirit,

[1] *Ss.* ii. § 8. [2] *Ss.* iv. § 15.

of dutiful submission to authority, human and divine, of moderation in diversions, of proper care of their families and domestic affairs; unless, I say, superiors of the present age are greater examples of decency, virtue, and religion than those of former times, for what reason in the world is it desirable that their example should have this greater influence over the poor?"[1] But the condition of the upper classes being such as he has described it, selfish, frivolous, and narrow-minded, it cannot be surprising if the lower classes, over whom they exercised an influence so predominant, were demoralised also, and became like their betters, selfish and sordid. This demoralisation, however, was noticeable chiefly in the towns.

In them the scoffs and jeers against religion which went the rounds of the salons of the great and the coffee-houses of the literary, were repeated in coarser forms in the taverns and the alehouses frequented by the poor, and produced there their baleful effects. Men grew not only indifferent to religion, but actively hostile against it. In the country the case was different. The clergy, particularly the non-juring and High Church clergy, exercised here a real and potent influence; and though, as we should gather both from Butler's sermons and *Charge*, indifference to religion was sadly prevalent, and the duty of instructing the poor, and even that of keeping the churches in decent repair, often neglected, yet any overt acts of hostility to religion were deeply resented, and were quite likely to draw down on the perpetrator of them condign punishment. We may say, then, that in the country, religion, if not a very active, was a powerful and conservative influence, one which men were most unwilling to part with, even though it slumbered and was apparently lifeless.

There was, moreover, another cause of demoralisa-

[1] *Ss.* iv. §§ 15, 16.

tion, destructive alike of morality and religion, frightfully prevalent at this time in the cities, from which the inhabitants of the country districts remained comparatively free. This was the habit of spirit-drinking, which, imported, it is said, originally from Holland, prevailed to a hideous and alarming extent in London and the other great towns. Historians tell us that never did drinking rise to such a height, or assume such degrading and repulsive forms, as in the early years of George I.'s reign; and though legislative action did something to check it, the evil continued to be disastrously prevalent throughout the reigns of his two successors. In the country, beer and not spirits remained the staple drink of the people; and while habits of hard drinking prevailed among all classes, the effects of drinking deep potations of beer were less permanent and less disastrous than were those which the spirit-drinking debauches of the towns caused.[1]

It remains to say something now of the position and condition of the clergy before proceeding to speak of the more professed moral teachers of the times. That,

[1] Of the effects of the introduction of this disastrous habit Mr. Lecky thus writes: "It was not till about the year 1724 that the passion for gin-drinking appears to have affected the masses of the population, and it spread with the rapidity and violence of an epidemic. Small as is the place which this fact occupies in English history, it was probably, if we consider all the consequences which have flowed from it, the most momentous in that of the eighteenth century—incomparably more so than any event in the purely political or military annals of the country. The fatal passion for drink was at once and irrevocably implanted in the nation. And the consequences were thus described by a contemporary: 'There is not only no safety in living in this town (London), but scarcely any in the country now, robbery and murder have grown so frequent. Our people have now become, what they never before were, cruel and inhuman. These accursed spirituous liquors, which to the shame of our government are so easily to be had and in such quantities drunk, have changed the very nature of our people, and they will, if continued to be drank, destroy the very race of the people themselves.'" —*Hist. of England*, vol. i. 479-481.

on the whole, the clergy were neither popular nor respected is sufficiently evident from contemporary literature. "The unedifying lives of the clergy are," writes Mr. Pattison, "a standard theme of sarcasm, and continued to be so till a late period in the century."[1] Dr. Brown, while finding fault with the little respect in which the office of the clergy was held, as being the natural result of the general decay of religion by which he believes the times to be characterised, hints that too often the lives and conduct of the clergy palliated, if they did not justify, this low estimate; and Butler's writings contain much which seems to bear out such a statement. He notices in one place "how general was the discontinuance of that religious intercourse between pastors and people in private, which remains in Protestant churches abroad as well as in the Church of Rome; and how small was the public care and provision for keeping up a sense of religion in the lower ranks, except by distributing religious books."[2] He observes in another place that "the churches, again, partly by the fault of the laity, but partly also by that of the clergy themselves, have fallen into such disrepair that, to quote the words of Bishop Fleetwood, 'unless the good public spirit of building, repairing, and adorning churches prevails a great deal more amongst us, and be more encouraged, an hundred years will bring to the ground an huge number of our churches'"; adding, that "while the excellent prelate made this observation forty years ago, no one will imagine that the good spirit which he has recommended prevails more at present than it did then."[3] The exhortations which he gives to his clergy to keep up the services with a due regard to decency and dignity, to enforce upon their people the duty of family

[1] Pattison's *Essays*, vol. ii., Essay II. p. 105. [2] *Ss.* iv. § 17.
[3] *Charge*, § 18.

and private prayer, and of saying grace at meals, to make use of the opportunities presented by confirmation and first communion, by times of sickness and the great festivals, for teaching wholesome truths to their parishioners, show into what general neglect the performance of such duties had fallen. Indeed, the rapidity with which the Wesleyan movement spread, the eagerness with which the people flocked to listen to preaching which, often uninstructed and ill-balanced, and sometimes even hysterical and harmful, was at least earnest and soul-stirring, furnish the most eloquent testimony to the imperfection of the sermons and ministrations of the authorised clergy, and prove how greatly the people felt their deeper yearnings and sorer spiritual needs unsounded and unsatisfied.

Yet we should make a great mistake if we were to underrate the influence even of the country clergy. It was no longer, perhaps, that which it had been in the days of Queen Anne. The mass of the population had come to acquiesce in the new régime, while the body of the country clergy still held back and nourished, more or less in secret, their Jacobite proclivities. This created a certain barrier between them and the people generally; notably was this the case with the non-juring clergy, in whose ranks some of the worthiest, the most saintly, and therefore most influential, characters were to be found. Yet in spite of this, and in spite of their many shortcomings, the rural parochial clergy remained the recognised exponents of the religious consciousness of the people, their admitted guides, their counsellors and comforters. The ignorance in which the mass of the population was plunged tended to increase their influence; those who could not seek the guidance of books, and were still unacquainted with the somewhat doubtful blessings of a popular newspaper press, were necessarily

thrown back on the instructions of an accredited clergy for their ideas and beliefs. And in spite of the somewhat superficial unbelief of the towns, and the light-hearted and frivolous scepticism of the upper classes who frequented the club-houses and theatres, the main bulk of the quiet population remained at heart religious. That this is so may be gathered, among other proofs, from the many complaints which heretical writers make of the difficulty they found in gaining a hearing for their opinions, and the care that they take to express them in such a form as should not offend too openly the religious susceptibilities of their readers.[1]

The character of the influence of the town clergy was of another kind. They aspired to be, and to a great extent were, leaders of thought. Tillotson, Sherlock, Cudworth, Clarke, Secker, Benson, Rundle, Browne, Warburton, and Berkeley were all men of note in their different lines. It was from the ranks of such men that the bishops were chiefly chosen, and it is doubtful whether at any period in our history a more distinguished bench of bishops is to be found than those who were gathered together in the reign of George II., chiefly through the judicious exercise of patronage on the part of Queen Caroline. But the spiritual force of most of them, with the notable exceptions of Butler, Berkeley, and Benson, was by no means equal to their intellectual eminence; and they naturally failed to in-

[1] To show how strong was the hold which religion still had on the bulk of the people, Matthew Arnold quotes the following passage from a contemporary paper—the *Independent Whig*—which, after giving much good advice to the clergy to adopt a more liberal tone, continues: "The High Church, popish clergy will laugh in their sleeves at this advice, and think that there is folly enough yet left among the laity to support their authority; and will hug themselves and rejoice over the ignorance of the universities, the stupidity of the drunken squires, the panic of the tender sex, and the *never-to-be-shaken constancy of the multitude.*"

spire in others a strength and warmth of conviction which they lacked in themselves. They were consequently more successful in meeting objections which were urged by opponents than in making the religion which they defended an active and ruling force in the world. The "reason" to which, in common with all the philosophers of their time, they made their habitual and ultimate appeal, has ever been found, unless the heart is also touched, inadequate as a motive power; and so now too it proved. Another fact which weakened their influence was this—that, since they owed their promotion for the most part to those who were themselves notoriously indifferent to the interests of religion, people too readily assumed that they simply held a brief for the orthodox side, and that their conclusions were the result not so much of genuine conviction as of the exigencies of their position. The general upshot thus was that the clergy who were trusted had scarcely the intellectual ability to lead, while those who might have been leaders were but little trusted. Butler seems to have owed his exalted position, and the commanding influence which apparently, even at the first, his writings exerted, to the fact, that with undoubted intellectual eminence he combined a no less undoubted honesty and sincerity of religious conviction. Benson and Berkeley among his contemporaries had the same deep religious faith and obvious integrity of purpose; but Benson was by no means Butler's equal intellectually; and, though Berkeley was so, yet his speculative turn of mind and his almost paradoxical idealism rendered his writings far less popular and far less influential among his contemporaries than were those of Bishop Butler.

We must now turn to consider what was the accredited moral teaching of the time, current among the philosophers when Butler began to preach and write. The founder of what has been called inde-

pendent moral philosophy in England was Hobbes. He was the first who attempted to construct a system of ethics entirely unconnected with religion, and resting on its own basis. The foundation for such a system he sought in the primary necessities of human nature. Man, he held, was obviously at the outset, and really always, a purely selfish being, actuated exclusively by self-regarding impulses. These impulses sometimes, indeed, hid themselves under a cloak of apparent unselfishness; but strip away the cloak by a little analysis, and their true nature stands at once revealed. This is the task which in his definitions of the different passions Hobbes set himself; and there can be no doubt that he carries it out with marked ability and not a little cynicism and brutality. Thus religion is defined by him as "fear of power invisible feigned by the mind or imagined from tales publicly allowed"; where such tales are not allowed, the fear becomes superstition. Admiration is "joy from the apprehension of novelty"; pity is "grief for the calamity of another, and ariseth from the imagination that the like calamity may befall himself, and therefore is called also compassion."[1]

But from this constitution of his nature, and "since men's desires are for the most part the same, and their power of hurting one another not unequal," it follows inevitably that man in his natural state lives in a state of war, his hand against every man and every man's hand against him. In such a state of war there is obviously "no place for industry; because the fruit thereof is uncertain; and consequently no culture of the earth; no navigation, nor use of the commodities that may be imported by sea; no commodious building; no instruments of moving or removing such things as require much force; no knowledge of the face of the earth; no account of time; no arts; no letters; no society; and,

[1] Hobbes, *Lev.*, part i. chap. vi.

which is worst of all, continual fear and danger of violent death; and the life of man, solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short."[1] In such a state of nature there is obviously, further, no place for morality and no ground for moral obligation.

To escape, then, from such a vile condition becomes at once man's first interest and his primary duty. "To seek peace and ensue it," is the first law of nature; and the second, "that a man be willing, when others are so too, as far forth as for peace and defence of himself he shall think it necessary, to lay down his natural right to all things; and be contented with as much liberty against other men, as he would allow other men against himself." It is in accordance with these laws that man enters into a "Social Contract," and covenants with those about him to establish that "Sovereign Power" which shall prevent him and his fellows from ever sinking back into that appalling state of nature from which civil society has been called into existence to deliver them. It is only with the establishment of a power capable of enforcing its commands that morality first emerges; and the rules of morality are the rules which the Sovereign Power lays down with a view to the maintenance of peace. The sanction for the observance of these rules is to be found, partly in the fact that the Sovereign Power is able to and does actually affix penalties to any breach of them; partly in that the non-observance of them in any part would tend to bring back "that dissolute order of masterless men" which is the worst and most extreme of human ills.[3]

We see thus that morality has in Hobbes's view no inherent or antecedent sanctity; it derives its force from human ordinance, and its value from its conduciveness

[1] Hobbes, *Lev.*, part i. chap. xiii. [2] *Ibid.* part i. chap. xiv.
[3] *Ibid.* chaps. xvii., xviii.

to the permanence of human society and to the deliverance of man from that sense of insecurity from which, beyond all else, he must pray to be delivered. Good is, for him, only "whatsoever is the object of any man's desire," and "the object of his hate and aversion," evil: *pulchrum*, or fair, is "that which by some apparent sign promiseth good"; and *turpe*, the foul or base, is "that which promiseth evil"; the honourable is "whatsoever possession, action, or quality is an argument or sign of power"; and the dishonourable is the reverse. Worthiness "consisteth in a particular power or ability for that whereof he is said to be worthy."[1] Thus there are no moral distinctions antecedent to positive law, and he who would know what to do and what to avoid, what to pursue and what to abstain from, has only to consult the law, or, if the interpretation of the law be still doubtful, then the judge. The same law will not, it is true, be everywhere in force (though Hobbes seems to assume that in most civilised societies the laws laid down will not greatly vary), but the law, whatever it be, will have everywhere the same sanctity and the same absolute right to be obeyed. It is obvious that under such a system there is no place at all for the individual conscience, and only so much place for reason and prudence that a man is left free to gratify his desires as he likes within the limits prescribed by the law.

The subsequent writer by whom Hobbes's principles were most logically developed, and pushed most uncompromisingly into all their most repulsive consequences, was Bernard de Mandeville. His best known work, the *Fable of the Bees*, appeared, in the reprint which first attracted attention, in 1723, three years only before Butler's appointment as preacher at the Rolls. While Butler's writings contain no direct reference to this

[1] Hobbes, *Lev.*, part i. chaps. vi., x.

work, there can be but little doubt that one object which he has in all his sermons, but more especially in those on human nature, is to correct the one-sided, paradoxical, and unworthy picture of that nature which Mandeville had presented. In the *Fable of the Bees* Mandeville's main contention is that "private vices" are "public benefits," a statement which he gives as the alternative title of his work. This position he attempts to prove, first of all, by insisting on the important part which caprice, extravagance, and prodigality generally play in giving employment to labour; next, by pointing out that the passions of men, pride, lust, and cruelty, have been the great moving forces which have shaped society, as we see it, and wrought out the complex structure of a civilised nation; and, what is more, they are still the great moving powers, though we hide them under decorous disguises.[1] There is, of course, truth in both contentions, though the fallacy in both is clear enough. Had man no wants, had man even very few wants, so he subsequently modifies and explains his own assertion when taken to task for it, any considerable advance in material civilisation would be indeed impossible. A Trappist community could hardly support a thriving commercial organisation. And yet it does not follow that it is our worst wants which employ labour most profitably, or that it is he who spends, rather than he who saves, who benefits society most. And again, while pride, lust, and cruelty have played their part in building up society, they are even more responsible for its evils than they are for its blessings; indeed, they themselves constitute in no small measure those evils; and they could not have built up society at all had they not been in a measure controlled by the virtues which Mandeville decries, and the better impulses whose reality he denies. For it was another

[1] Leslie Stephen, *English Thought, etc.*, vol. ii. chap. ix. p. 39.

part of his theory to maintain that the so-called virtues were merely the results which moralists, law-givers, and philosophers had by flattery extracted from the pride of mankind. In themselves these qualities had no intrinsic value; they contributed nothing to the happiness or well-being of society. Men have been cajoled into praising them and persuaded into admiring them by those who wished to impose upon them by these means. In the same way, all allegation of impulses which have not a directly selfish or self-regarding character he denounces as mere hypocrisy. Benevolence is dictated at best by the hope of the return which may be secured by it; society and the social instincts have grown out of men's struggles, and are promoted by us merely from a sense of their usefulness; religion is but the outgrowth of that natural fetichism which induces young children to fancy that everything thinks and feels as they do themselves; parental affection has no merit, it is implanted in us by nature, it is but a means of pleasing ourselves; it may be exhibited by the basest as well as by the best; conscience itself is a mere sham, a convenient cloak with which to disguise conduct really prompted by quite different motives. Any instinct, it has been well said,[1] which Mandeville cannot explain, or of which, we may add, he is not himself conscious, he denies; and of the finer and nobler instincts he can give no explanation, and had, alas! but little experience.

The opposition to the doctrines of Hobbes and Mandeville took two contrary directions. On the one hand, an attempt was made to establish the "eternal and immutable" character of moral distinctions by showing that these distinctions were rooted in reason and in the necessary relations of things which reason apprehends; on the other hand, Hobbes was directly met on his own

[1] Leslie Stephen, *English Thought, etc.*, vol. ii. p. 41.

ground; and it was shown by an appeal to facts that he had presented an imperfect and distorted view of human nature as it actually exists; that he had left wholly out of account some of its most indubitable and essential elements; and had misrepresented some of its most notable characteristics. The chief exponents of the former method are Cudworth, Samuel Clarke, and Wollaston; of the latter, Shaftesbury, Hutcheson, and Butler himself. This difference of method, observable among the moralists of his time, Butler has himself called attention to, and has notified his adherence to the latter rather than the former school.[1] "There are," he says, "two ways in which the subject of morals may be treated. One begins from inquiring into the abstract relations of things; the other, from a matter of fact, namely, what the particular nature of man is, its several parts, their economy or constitution; from whence it proceeds to determine what course of life it is, which is correspondent to this whole nature. In the former method the conclusion is expressed thus, that vice is contrary to the nature and reason of things; in the latter, that it is a violation or breaking in upon our own nature. Thus they both lead us to the same thing, our obligations to the practice of virtue; and thus they exceedingly strengthen and enforce each other. The first seems the most direct formal proof, and in some respects the least liable to cavil and dispute; the latter is in a peculiar manner adapted to satisfy a fair mind, and is more easily applicable to the several particular relations and circumstances in life."

Among the adherents of each of these methods there were, again, not unimportant differences in their point of view. Cudworth was a Platonist, and his arguments were fashioned on a Platonic model. Right and wrong, good and bad, were by him regarded as the necessary,

[1] *Sermons*, Preface, § 7, above, p. 8.

and so the eternal and immutable, forms under which the mind regarded the actions of personal beings. The mind did not derive the ideas from the actions, but they were points of view, aspects, or categories from which it inevitably regarded the actions; it could not think of the actions of personal and intelligent beings except as exhibiting these characteristics; being thus conditioning factors in all the mind's experience, they could not themselves be the result of that experience. That they have an objective validity was shown from the fact that men cannot think themselves out of them. And further, since they are the conditions under which all minds regard actions, motives, and characters, they are no less conditions of the Divine mind than they are conditions of the human. Different minds may apprehend them with different degrees of clearness; passion may obscure their legitimate influence, desire may prevent the voice of reason being attended to; but to reason herself the distinctions are ever apparent, and so far as men guide themselves by reason, so far will their conduct be in accordance with the ideas of right and virtue. For reason no less recognises the obligatoriness of the right than the rightness of the relations themselves.

The influence which most moulded Clarke's thought was that of Newton rather than of Plato. Clarke, indeed, aspired to do for the world of morals what Newton had done for the physical universe; to introduce, that is, a point of view which should give to the whole realm coherence and consistency. Adopting a doctrine of Locke's, that the truths of morality are no less capable of demonstration than are those of mathematics, he attempted actually to construct a demonstrative science of ethics. The two propositions which he lays down as fundamental for the science are—(1) that there are necessary and eternal relations, that different things bear one to another; and a consequent fitness, or un-

fitness, of the application of different things, or different relations, one to another. (2) To these, as data, God necessarily conforms His will, and this conformity constitutes His Justice, Equity, Goodness, and Truth towards the whole Universe. Our voluntary conformity to the same data constitutes the corresponding virtues in us, and is our duty; and this irrespective of positive command or of personal reward and punishment.[1] What Clarke's contention then amounts to is this—that what the relations are, which befit a given character placed under given circumstances, can be as certainly and intuitively apprehended by the reason, as what are the geometrical properties which result from the constitution or definition of a given geometrical figure. Thus the infinite superiority of God to man renders reverence and obedience fit on the part of man to God; since it is true that on God we depend, that His will is just and His power irresistible. For God, again, it is intrinsically fitter to work by rule and order than by chance; to secure the good of the universe rather than its misery; and to reward men according to their deserts rather than in any arbitrary and uncertain fashion. Similarly, we perceive at once that it is fitter for us men to promote the good than the ruin of our fellows, and that, quite apart from any expected recompense or reward. "To call in question these differences which are eternal and unchangeable is, in Clarke's view, no less absurd than to doubt whether a square is double of a triangle of the same base and height."[2] There is, however, he admits, this difference between our judgments in morals and our judgments in mathematics —that in morals passion is apt to intervene and blind our judgment, whereas in our mathematical reasonings there

[1] Martineau, *Types of Ethical Theory*, vol. ii. p. 430; and Clarke's *Unalterable Obligations*, pp. 174, 175.

[2] Martineau, *ibid.* p. 43.

is no similar liability. But since we have reason, and are free to follow it, we are without excuse; and are well aware of our obligation to do voluntarily the thing that our passion contests; of which we have clear witness in our own inward assent to what we outwardly contradict, and in our self-condemnation when we choose the wrong. The unreasonableness of wilfully wrong action is just the same as if we refused assent to some demonstrated certainty; it is a vain attempt to make things be what they are not, which is absurdity and insolence. "So far, then," he concludes, "as men are conscious of what is right and wrong, so far they are under an obligation to act accordingly; and that eternal rule of right which I have been describing, 'tis evident ought as indispensably to govern men's actions as it cannot but necessarily determine their assent."[1] Wollaston put what is substantially the same doctrine into a more paradoxical form when he proclaimed that every wrong deed or crime was essentially a lie, the willingly deluding ourselves into regarding our act or our relations to others to be essentially different from what they really are.

Now, not to raise the point, which is, however, not beyond dispute, whether it is the same kind of reason, or reason acting under the same indispensable conditions, which apprehends moral relations and distinctions, as that which apprehends mathematical, it is obvious that the demonstration that a certain action, or course of conduct, is "unreasonable," "absurd," or "inconsistent" would have weight at most with those who already wish that their conduct should be governed by reason. To most wrong-doers, we fear, the proof that their conduct is absurd, irrational, inconsistent, and even "untrue to fact," will add but little to the terrors of wrong-doing; and would be found in practice but a

[1] *Unchangeable Obligations*, pp. 184–190.

feeble deterrent. And after all, the consciousness of having made a mistake in some intellectual process, however mortifying it may be to our pride, and however much we may regret it, does not strike us as being identical with the sense of shame and guilt we feel when the performance of a wrong deed in some important matter is brought home to us. Thus, however successful the intellectual school may have been in establishing against Hobbes and Mandeville the eternal and immutable character of moral distinctions, it cannot be said that they were equally successful in constructing a system which should have practical weight and efficiency in enforcing the claims of morality. No doubt, it were to be wished that men would always act reasonably; as a matter of fact, they are constantly content to set reason at defiance, and to forfeit without a shudder their claim to be regarded as rational creatures.

It seems to have been some sense of this practical failure and weakness of the intellectual system which drove Shaftesbury to take up quite a different line in opposition to Hobbes. With Shaftesbury the main interest lies not in showing that the distinction between virtue and vice is rooted in the nature of things, and only therefore apprehended by the reason, but rather that it has its root and sanction in the constitution of human nature. It is to him, and still more to his follower Hutcheson, that we owe the phrases "moral sense," "reflex sense," "sense of right and wrong." By this he understood an immediate perception, analogous to our sense of beauty or sense of propriety, which enables us to recognise that which is "harmonious, proportionate, and suitable" both in the universe at large and still more in the sphere of human motive, passion, and conduct. Such a sense finds pleasure in and is gratified by that which is accordant to it;

it is pained and outraged by all that jars upon it, and is discordant with it. The pleasure which the gratified sense inspires becomes in this way, at least in those who are more delicately organised, highly educated and full of sentiment, a strong incentive to virtue and virtuous conduct; while the pain which the outraged sense inflicts, at least on similar natures, becomes an equally strong deterrent from vice. When we feel that we have ourselves acted disproportionately to our nature, allowing the lower motives to triumph over the higher, our moral sense is pained and grieved; and the same takes place when we see such conduct in others. Thus when we act ourselves from purely selfish motives and impulses, neglecting or trampling upon the common good; or gratify revenge where the repentance of the offender pleads for pity and forgiveness; our moral sense rises in revolt against such conduct, we are shocked and disgusted by it. When, on the other hand, a sense of public duty or disinterested benevolence triumphs over personal gratification or malice, our moral sense is satisfied and delighted in the contemplation of such an action; we admire and approve of it whether we recognise it in ourselves or contemplate it in others.

To this theory there is, however, an obvious objection—that it makes the distinction between virtue and vice, goodness and badness, a mere matter of taste, a sentiment which the finer natures may possess, but which may be wholly wanting in the coarser and less refined. The theory, in other words, furnishes us with no objective standard of right and wrong. To this Shaftesbury replies, in the first place, that the possibility of the perversion of the moral sense will not prove its general untrustworthiness, any more than the possibility of error shows that the reason cannot arrive at truth. And, again, that just as there is an objective standard of beauty, to the apprehension of

which all educated and refined people approximate in spite of occasional variations from it; so even more emphatically is there a recognised standard of right and wrong, of good and evil, which all right-minded and educated men will agree in, to attain to which will be for such a true pleasure, to depart from it a real pain, even though here also occasional aberrations are to be found. The fact that right and wrong, good and evil, are recognised by human faculty, a faculty which in virtue of its being personal must be also subjective, no more destroys the objective validity of the distinctions so recognised, than does the fact that beauty is apprehended by and relative to human perception prove that beauty has no real or objective existence. In both cases, as in the case of truths apprehended by the reason, human faculty may be the means of revealing to us a world of abiding and eternal realities. It is more likely that it is so than that it is not so.[1] In this respect Shaftesbury seems successfully to repel the charge of arbitrariness advanced against his theory.

So far, indeed, all is consistent and coherent: he has recognised the so-called moral sense as the ultimate arbiter among the conflicting impulses or passions, and the courses of conduct to which they severally point, and he has claimed for its promptings reality and a right to be heard. But at this point he somewhat unexpectedly proceeds to ask the question—What obligation is there to virtue, to act, that is, in accordance with the promptings of the moral sense? What reason have we to follow its dictates? The answer that he returns is, that to promote virtue is the surest road to happiness, just as to be vicious entails most certain misery. Both question and answer seem alike an unnecessary appendix to his whole theory; for if the moral sense brings

[1] *Characteristics*, vol. ii. part iii. § 1.

with it, as he seems to suggest, its own credentials, why ask at all why we are bound to listen to it? And the answer as given by Shaftesbury to enforce his system is open, as Butler points out, to the following objection: "The not taking into consideration this authority, which is implied in the idea of reflex approbation, or disapprobation, seems a material deficiency or omission in Lord Shaftesbury's *Inquiry concerning Virtue*. He has shown beyond all contradiction that virtue is naturally the interest or happiness, and vice the misery, of such a creature as man, placed in the circumstances which we are in this world. But suppose there are particular exceptions, a case which this author was unwilling to put, and yet surely it is to be put; or suppose—a case which he has put and determined—that of a sceptic not convinced of this happy tendency of virtue, or being of a contrary opinion. His determination is that it would be without remedy. One may say more explicitly, that, leaving out the authority of reflex approbation or disapprobation, such an one would be under an obligation to act viciously; since interest, one's own happiness, is a manifest obligation, and there is not supposed to be any other obligation in the case."[1]

Yet though the making the obligation to virtue to arise from its tendency to promote happiness, and the deterrent from vice to consist in the misery which is sure to follow from it, be an excrescence and, from one point of view, a weakness in Shaftesbury's system, from another it undoubtedly adds strength and cohesion to it. For Shaftesbury's desire was to show that the world, as it is actually constituted, is an abode well adapted to be the home of such a moral being as man is; and that therefore it is reasonable to conclude that the Author of the

[1] *Sermons*, Preface, § 20.

universe is one and the same with the Author of man's moral nature, and that so far all things are of a piece; but towards establishing this it is of the first importance to prove that in the world, as we know it, virtue is generally rewarded by happiness and vice punished with misery. Mr. Leslie Stephen, indeed, finds great fault with Shaftesbury for holding and attempting to establish such comfortable doctrines. He tries himself to show that the world is an ill-adjusted place for a moral and, perhaps, even for any intelligent being; and that misery and misfortune haunt the good almost equally with the bad. But against this view we have Butler's candid admission, "that Shaftesbury has shown beyond all contradiction that virtue is naturally the interest or happiness, and vice the misery, of such a creature as man, placed in the circumstances that we are in this world"; and though we may admit that Shaftesbury's good nature, and his own fortunate position and polished and happy temper, may have led him to take a more favourable view of the world and its adaptation to a virtuous human life than the facts will warrant, yet we must remember that the danger of exaggeration on the other side is almost equally great; and that those who exaggerate in this direction undermine what must always remain one of the great arguments for believing in the justice and wisdom of God, and one of the best supports which human frailty can receive.

It was into such a state of moral practice and opinion that Butler, coming up to London almost directly after he had taken his degree, found himself plunged. His position as preacher at the Rolls secured him an audience and gave him a certain prominence, and he began almost at once to take a part in the fight. Against the selfishness and moral scepticism of the age, finding its philosophical expression in the system

of Hobbes and Mandeville, he stepped forward at once as a strenuous adversary. Yet he ranged himself under the banner of neither of the recognised opponents of Hobbism. The lack of moral sanction from which their doctrine suffered repelled him from the system of the rationalists; Shaftesbury's teaching, while he approved of its method, appeared to him too exclusive and restricted, a system better adapted to appeal to the sentiments of the educated and cultivated few than to satisfy the wants of the many. A fresh foundation had, he held, to be laid in a more careful scrutiny of the facts, and in a more scientific and better-considered psychology.

CHAPTER III

BUTLER'S SERMONS

It was not an accident which led Butler to publish his *Sermons* before the *Analogy*. The main positions in the *Sermons* are taken for granted and presupposed in the *Analogy*; the *Sermons* furnish the necessary groundwork on which the later work reposes. And when Butler began to write the air was, as already noticed,[1] full of moral controversies. Clarke's lectures on "The Unchangeable Obligation of Natural Religion, and the Truth and Certainty of the Christian Revelation" were delivered in 1705; Shaftesbury's writings appeared between 1708 and 1711; the second and chief edition of Mandeville's *Fable of the Bees* in 1723. The *Sermons* themselves represent the result of eight years' meditation and work. Butler was appointed preacher at the Rolls in 1718, but did not publish them till he had resigned his office in 1726. He tells us at the close of the Preface prefixed to the second edition of the *Sermons* in 1729, that "the reader is not to look for any particular reason for the choice of the greatest part of these discourses, their being taken from amongst many others, preached in the same place through a course of eight years, being in great measure accidental."[2] But as it is obvious that in the selection of them Butler cannot but have been guided by the consideration which of them appeared to him the most

[1] Chap. I. p. 12.

[2] *Sermons*, Preface, § 39.

important, or seemed best adapted to meet the special needs of his time, we may take the choice he has made as a sufficient guide to the topics on which his thoughts most habitually ran, and those on which he considered it most imperative to insist. But among them there can be little doubt that he attached most importance to the first three, on Human Nature. To these all the others may, as he himself points out,[1] be regarded either as supplementary or as illustrative. This being so, we can hardly be wrong in looking to the views contained in them as furnishing an index to what Butler regarded as the most fundamental doctrines in his moral system. The following, then, are the five points which in the sermons on Human Nature or in the volume as a whole are specially brought out and insisted upon.

1. The first point upon which he dwells is the existence, independence, and authority of disinterested affections in mankind at large. This furnishes the subject of the first sermon on Human Nature, of a great part of the two sermons on Compassion, of the two on the Love of our Neighbour, and of the one on Forgiveness of Injuries. The need for plain speaking on this head we may gather from the remarks he makes at the beginning of the first Sermon on the Love of our Neighbour. Here he lays it down that while particular ages are probably distinguished by the prevalence of certain forms of wickedness, "we may take it as very much the distinction of the present to profess a contracted spirit, and greater regards to self-interest, than appears to have been done formerly."[2] How true this was, the review in the last chapter has, I hope, made sufficiently plain. Now, the general position which Butler lays down is this—that from a "review and comparison

[1] Preface, §§ 26, 38. [2] Sermon XI. § 1.

of the nature of man as respecting self and as respecting society, it will plainly appear, that there are as real and the same kinds of indications in human nature, that we were made for society and to do good to our fellow-creatures, as that we were intended to take care of our own life and health and private good; and that the same objections lie against one of these assertions as against the other."[1] Whether we be thus or otherwise constituted is, as he elsewhere observes, a mere question of fact or natural history,[2] to be judged of, like any other matters of fact, by observation, experience, and testimony. But then, these all go to prove the undoubted existence in us—first, of benevolence as a general principle of action; and secondly, of those more particular forms of it which are signified by such names as love, friendship, compassion, and paternal and filial affection. The only way in which an attempt had been made to escape from this plain evidence of testimony and experience was that adopted by Hobbes, who tried to show that each one of these supposed unselfish principles is really a form, more or less disguised, of self-love, *i.e.* of the love of power. Yet such an explanation, Butler contends, breaks down entirely when tested by the evidence of facts. The degree in which we show compassion towards one object or another by no means coincides with the degree in which such a display ministers to our own consciousness of power or self-importance. How, again, does such an explanation account for a man's wishing that good to another which he knows himself unable to procure, and rejoicing in it though procured by a third person? Would not, on this showing, benevolence and cruelty be one in essence, since both may equally gratify our sense of power; and if they are merely different modes of the exercise of power,

[1] Sermon I. § 3. [2] Sermon I. § 4, note.

what reason should we have for distinguishing between them, or preferring the one to the other? Nor, again, can pity be explained away as a form of self-love, or, as Hobbes would have it, nothing more than the "imagination or fiction of future calamity to ourselves, proceeding from the sense (he means sight or knowledge) of another man's calamity."[1] Were Hobbes's contention true, it would be the most timorous and anxious, not the most helpful, who would be most pitiful and therefore most admired; while, as a matter of fact, the intensity of the dread of like calamity to ourselves, so far from quickening, seems even to diminish and in extreme cases entirely to paralyse our sense of pity and compassion. Fear, it has been well observed by another writer, is almost always cruel, just because it is fundamentally selfish.

But if the existence of those feelings of goodwill and benevolence to others be established by the undoubted testimony of experience, by observation external and internal, and by ordinary language, and cannot be explained away by any supersubtle analysis; must it not follow that the existence of such feelings as much shows that we were intended by nature to do good to our fellow-men, as the existence of impulses, the gratification of which results in private good, proves that we were intended to consult and provide for our private good? It may, indeed, be urged that these impulses, if followed heedlessly and excessively, will lead us to a course of conduct harmful rather than advantageous to the community; but exactly the same holds good with respect to those impulses which are supposed to be connected with our own individual happiness; to follow these contrary to the dictates of reason and conscience is at least as injurious to our individual well-being, as the heedless or wrongful

[1] Sermon V. § 1, note.

following of social instincts is contrary to the notion of true benevolence, and injurious to the welfare of society at large.[1]

The thought, thus sketched in outline in the First Sermon on Human Nature, is followed out more at length and in more detail in the two sermons on Compassion (Sermons V., VI.). In these Butler shows —First, that compassion is a fact, and a prominent and leading fact, in human nature; and that the effect of its presence is to lead men in many cases to the relief of suffering, or at anyrate to that mitigation of it which the sense that our sorrows are shared by others, and that we are not left to bear them alone, affords. Secondly, that though reason apart from compassion might, as some of the objectors affirmed, lead men to the relief of distress, and exhibition of fellow-feeling with others, yet we are very much aided in the performance of these kindly offices by having in us a natural affection to which distress and suffering make their appeal, and that our kindly duties would be more often neglected than at present were this natural feeling of compassion absent. Thirdly, the far more widely spread prevalence of compassion than of a fellow-feeling in one another's joys and happiness is, further, he observes, in accordance with the circumstances of man's life on earth, in which the opportunities we have of inflicting injury and pain upon one another are far greater than any we have of augmenting one another's joys and happiness; and the occasions we have for relieving misery and consoling sorrow are more numerous and more exigent than those which occur for sharing each other's delights. Fourthly, the contention that we should stifle feelings of pity and compassion, on the ground that the indulgence of them brings pain to ourselves,

[1] Sermon I. §§ 12, 13, 14.

is a base form of selfishness, and a wilful ignoring of the lessons which the very constitution of our nature is intended to teach us. Lastly, the fact that nature, *i.e.* the arrangement of God, has implanted in us a special impulse leading us to relieve and mitigate distress should teach us that the reasonable course to pursue in our own lives is "to lower our notions of happiness and enjoyment, and bring them down to the reality of things, to what is attainable, to what the frailty of our condition will admit of, which for any continuance is only tranquillity, ease, and moderate satisfactions."[1]

Now, while some of these remarks of Butler (the last perhaps particularly) seem somewhat far-fetched and fine drawn, suggested rather by his own timorous, shrinking, and despondent disposition than by the truth of things, and though we feel throughout his pleadings for compassion that his is the voice of one crying in the wilderness to a selfish, unfeeling, uncompassionate age and generation; yet in the main it is the voice of nature which he makes sound in our ears; he is asserting the claims and obligation of a principle which, though it is easy to ignore it and possible to stifle it, has a right to be listened to. Indeed, the obligatory character of the claim which pity and compassion make upon us he seems to have understated and underestimated rather than exaggerated. It is not merely that compassion is one among a number of competing passions and emotions which, as all of them present and appealing to us, may each of them put in a claim to be heard and attended to in turn; rather, it is an emotion the prevalence of which, whether in ourselves or others, we approve and applaud, and the absence or neglect of which we condemn and lament. It is on this obligatoriness of the feeling, the high place which, to use the language of Dr. Martineau,

[1] Sermon VI. § 12.

conscience assigns it among the competing springs of action, — it is on this far more than on the argument derived from final causes, or on the effect which the habitual gratification of the emotion may have in increasing the sum of human happiness, or still more in mitigating the sum of human misery, that the true sanction for listening to its promptings really depends. Butler, I think, in not pointing this out has somewhat needlessly weakened his case.

But then, it may be asked, are there no limits to this duty of compassion, and are we to yield ourselves simply, on every occasion which calls it forth, to the promptings of this feeling? Certainly there are limits; nor are we bound always to listen to its promptings. It is obvious, as Butler points out, that the primary end of compassion is to diminish and alleviate misery. But when we find that the effect of gratifying our compassion, in this or that particular way or instance, will be, not to mitigate, but to enhance human misery as a whole, by making men, for example, rush more easily into conduct which will entail on them misery, then it is obvious that, in the interests of a higher and more genuine compassion, it is our duty to curb and control the narrower and more specific. Only, we are bound in this, as in all other matters, not to play fast and loose with ourselves, or to make imaginary, and possibly even fictitious, ill effects of compassion in general an excuse for neglecting an obvious duty in this or that particular case.

A second limit which may have to be put to compassion is this. The relief and mitigation of misery is not the highest and most ultimate end at which human effort can aim; that is rather to be found in the edification of character, our own or others,—we may not, then, so exercise our compassion that it shall interfere with this supreme end. It is obvious, for instance, how

much and how constantly this principle has to be taken into account in dealing with the education of children; and this will explain the limits there may be even to the compassion of God Himself. For while we regard compassion as an attribute of God,—and certainly every Christian who accepts the doctrine of the Incarnation must believe in God's compassion,—yet is it not reasonable to assume that limits must be recognised to the possibility of God's compassion in the principle now enunciated? The whole teaching of Christianity goes to show that God's compassion cannot be of such a kind, or exercised in such a way, that it shall interfere with what we believe to be God's ultimate aim, the discipline and education of the individuals composing the human race. It is often, as the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews puts it, quoting from the Book of Proverbs, that those "whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. It is for chastening that ye endure; God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is there whom his father chasteneth not?"[1]

Before leaving this part of his subject Butler finds himself compelled to grapple with a difficulty, to the consideration of which he devotes two sermons—namely, Sermon VIII., on Resentment, and IX., on the Forgiveness of Injuries. The difficulty is this: he had laid it down that the presence in us of unselfish instincts or feelings, such as pity, compassion, and friendliness, is a clear sign that we are intended to promote the good of others as well as our own good, and ought to be accepted as such. But if this be so, then is not the presence in us of impulses which lead us directly to do harm to our neighbour equally a sign that we are intended by the Author of our nature to do such harm as well as good? The most notable impulses which lead us to do harm to

[1] Hebrews xii. 6, 7.

others are resentment and revenge. Ambition and the love of power, which might be considered, and indeed have often proved, anti-social affections, Butler assumes to be naturally not such, since they are more usually and certainly gratified by doing good than by doing harm to our fellow-men; but in the case of resentment and revenge no similar plea can be urged. The difficulty will, however, be met if we look a little more attentively into the true character and bearing of these two passions. Resentment, it is to be observed, is of two kinds, hasty and sudden, and settled and deliberate.[1] The first of these, which is called "anger," or in a special sense "passion," arises at the infliction on us of any hurt or pain, whether the hurt be intended or not; it is often purely instinctive. Anger flames up if any one treads on our toe, or if we receive any sudden blow. "The reason and end for which man was made thus liable to this passion is that he might be better qualified to prevent, and likewise (or perhaps chiefly) to resist and defeat, sudden force, violence and opposition, considered merely as such, and without regard to the fault or demerit of him who is the author of them. . . . There are plainly cases—and in the uncultivated parts of the world, and when regular governments are not formed, they frequently happen—in which there is no time for consideration, and yet to be passive is certain destruction; in which sudden resistance is the only security."[2] The final cause, then, of this sudden anger is self-preservation and self-defence, the warding off from ourselves in moments of danger whatever threatens our life or security.

But there is another kind of resentment, to which Butler gives the name of deliberate anger, which is excited not by sudden hurt but by injury, whether real or imaginary. The injury is not necessarily injury to ourselves; for the feeling of resentment may be excited by

[1] Sermon VIII. § 5. [2] *Ibid.* § 7.

injury done to others as well as to ourselves, particularly to those we love and care for; and in some cases and in a less degree by the perusal of a story of a purely imaginary wrong done. Of course, when the injury is done to ourselves, or to those near us whom we identify with ourselves, our resentment is apt to be more intense and acute; inasmuch as we cannot help being more directly interested in that which immediately concerns ourselves than in that which concerns others; but in spite of this, the fact that resentment can be excited by wrongs done to strangers, and even by imaginary wrongs, is a proof that the proper object of resentment is hurt or injury in general; and so that its final cause is the punishment of wrong and the promotion of justice. But if this is so, then it is shown to be in its proper nature and when rightly directed not an anti-social but a social passion; as Butler puts it: "The natural object or occasion of settled resentment being injury, as distinct from pain or loss; it is easy to see that to prevent and remedy such injury, and the miseries arising from it, is the end for which this passion was implanted in man. It is to be considered as a weapon, put into our hands by nature, against injury, injustice, and cruelty."[1] But this weapon is, where we ourselves are affected, particularly apt to be turned to wrong account, and requires, therefore, to be used with the greatest caution. While sudden anger is apt to degenerate into passion or peevishness, in settled anger a man is apt to imagine injuries, to exaggerate them, to refuse to listen to reasonable justification or excuse, to hug his wrath and insist on vengeance even when pardon has been sought or reparation offered. Still, in spite of these excesses, resentment remains, when properly used, a moral impulse, lying at the very root of one kind of justice, and acting as an inward witness against vice.

[1] Sermon VIII. § 11.

In the sermon on the Forgiveness of Injuries, Butler touches on an even more difficult question, namely, what are the proper limits to resentment? How far, if at all, is it justifiable to nourish revenge? The question was, we must remember, both more practical and more difficult to answer in an age when readiness to avenge any insult, real or imaginary, was supposed to be a part of manliness; and to be willing to fight a duel on any, the most trifling, occasion the duty of a gentleman; and when to speak even of the possibility of the forgiveness of injuries was stigmatised as mere "rant."[1] But I do not think that Butler's treatment of the subject can be regarded as altogether satisfactory. An overreadiness to take vengeance is an evil which seems to need a more drastic remedy than any that he propounds. It is no doubt true that revenge, if freely indulged in, tends, as he points out, directly to propagate itself, till it renders the very existence of civilised society almost impossible; and that so far from acting, when freely indulged in, as a deterrent from vice, it becomes itself a vice of a very dangerous and tyrannical kind: but to attempt to induce men to forego vengeance by an appeal to the kindliness and goodwill they owe to men in general, and to assure them they are probably exaggerating the injury they are so anxious to avenge, seems but a weak remedy to apply to so dangerous a disease; one likely to be ineffectual in securing its object. Butler is on firmer ground when he presses home the need we all have to be ourselves forgiven, as a reason why we should forgive others; and he might have appealed with more force than he does to the admiration which all men feel for a forgiveness exercised, not weakly or insincerely, but genuinely and nobly, to a repentant and contrite enemy. Indeed, the admiration would be even greater and more outspoken than it is, were it not that men are too apt to

[1] Sermon IX. § 12.

imagine (often not without reason) that the forgiveness of injuries proceeds from weakness or want of courage and spirit, not from genuine nobility; or, on the other hand, that not sufficient care has been taken to assure oneself of the reality of the repentance and regret. Probably the forgiveness of injuries and the mitigation of revenge are points on which Christian preaching, and specially our Lord's own direct teaching, have more modified prevailing sentiment than on any other subject; but they have done so because they were backed by the whole power of His example, and can appeal to the motive which the forgiveness exercised by Him towards all penitent sinners inspires;—and with these helps, it cannot be yet said that Christianity has succeeded even among professing Christians in extracting from revenge that selfish character which makes it at once an anti-social force and a sin against God.

But looking broadly at the whole question of which this forms a part, we may say that Butler has succeeded in making good both the points which he started to maintain. He has shown that if we are to take nature as we know it for our guide, then we shall find a number of instincts, differently developed indeed in different men, in different ages and countries, which lead us to promote the good of society no less than our own good; and secondly, that those instincts which, like resentment and revenge, appear at the first blush anti-social, turn out, if we regard them more carefully, to play a useful, we may almost say an indispenable, part in human society; and that it is their excesses or perversions, not the instincts themselves, which are really at fault in those instances in which they show themselves destructive or dangerous. Where Butler might have strengthened his doctrine seems to be in this point—that the real sanction which induces men to follow these instincts lies not so much (as he seems to place it)

in their occurrence as actual parts of, or facts in, our nature, but in the approval they receive, when wisely followed, from an enlightened moral judgment, and the disapprobation they encounter from the same, when perverted or exaggerated. Nor need we be alarmed if it is said that Butler's doctrine is essentially unhistorical, and that he assumes a fixity and permanence in the main features of human nature which does not exist; for, in the first place, there is a much greater fixity and permanence in human nature than is for controversial purposes sometimes assumed to be the case, so that its main lines can be sufficiently ascertained; and next, the general direction in which human nature moves—which is tolerably obvious—may be taken, if it is wished, as a substitute for that fixed standard of human nature which Butler postulates.

2. Butler's second point is that there is no more special opposition or contrariety between benevolence and self-love than between self-love and various other principles or affections in our nature. The principle is stated in general terms in the Preface [1] and in Sermons I.[2] and III.;[3] and is worked out more at length in the two sermons on the Love of our Neighbour (Sermons XI., XII.). In order to prove his position he draws a distinction, on which he often insists, between self-love on the one hand, and our various particular affections, propensions, and passions on the other. The first of these is a "cool" or "reasonable" principle, in some sense even a "superior" principle, in our nature, having for its object our own individual well-being or happiness, considered as an end; the latter are directed to, and find their gratification in, certain definite external objects, in which when attained they rest, and the attainment of which is a source of pleasure; though the resulting pleasure need not be, and often is not,

[1] §§ 29, 30, 31. [2] §§ 11, 12. [3] §§ 7, 8.

directly contemplated or aimed at when the object is sought. It is often, in other words, the appetite itself, not the pleasure which results from its gratification, which prompts immediately the action done. Butler takes hunger, resentment, or revenge as instances of such special affections. Hunger is, properly speaking, a desire for food, and is satisfied when it obtains the food which is adequate and appropriate to satisfy the craving; resentment and revenge are desires to inflict upon those who have injured us hurts commensurate with or greater than the wrongs we believe ourselves to have received. We do not, in many instances, in satisfying our hunger or gratifying our revenge, think of the pleasure which will result from that satisfaction or gratification; we simply are set on action by the uneasiness or feeling or passion itself, quite apart from any ulterior motive. But it is obvious that as, in the first place, the possibility of our happiness and enjoyment depends on our having such instincts, affections, and propensions, in the gratification of which, under certain circumstances, we find pleasure and delight; so, in the second place, it may well happen that the gratification of these instincts may be carried out in such a way as to interfere with and, in extreme cases, completely ruin our happiness and well-being. Who has not seen a life sacrificed to the indulgence of resentment or the gratification of revenge, or even to an intense desire for wealth or reputation or fame? Did Othello consult well his own interests? Was he actuated by reasonable self-love? Or was Charles XII. of Sweden, or is the rake who has misspent and gambled away his fortune, actuated by reasonable self-love? It is clear, then, that as, on the one hand, reasonable self-love, and the care for our happiness as a whole, is mixed up with and depends upon the gratification of our different passions, desires, and affections;

so, on the other, these same desires, at many points and in many ways, come into conflict with and are opposed to cool and reasonable self-love and the claims of self-interest; and when it is asserted that the instincts of benevolence, goodwill, and compassion conflict with our interests, we are asserting no more about these instincts than may be asserted with perfect truth about all our special passions, affections, and propensions of every kind. "Thus it appears that there is no peculiar contrariety between self-love and benevolence; no greater competition between these than between any other particular affections and self-love."[1]

The gratification of any passion, and of benevolence among the rest, may conflict with the claims of self-love, but they need not do so, and indeed it may very well happen that our happiness may largely depend on the gratification of these different instincts. But if this is so, how, we may ask ourselves, has it come about that such special contrariety between benevolence and self-love has so often been supposed to exist? "The general mistake," Butler answers, "that there is some *greater* inconsistence between endeavouring to promote the good of another and self-interest, than between self-interest and pursuing anything else, seems, as hath already been hinted, to arise from our notions of property, and to be carried on by this property's being supposed to be itself our happiness or good. People are so very much taken up with this one subject that they seem from it to have formed a general way of thinking, which they apply to other things that they have nothing to do with."[2] He means that people too hastily infer that, because we cannot give away our property to others without diminishing that which we possess ourselves, therefore we cannot expend our affection or goodwill on others

[1] Sermon XI. § 11. [2] Sermon XI. § 19.

without leaving ourselves the poorer by that which we give. Of course, stated in this form, the fallacy becomes at once obvious. Indeed, as he goes on to show, the gratification of benevolence, compassion, and even of generosity, so far from being in any sense specially inimical to self-love, is far less opposed to it, both in itself and in the course of conduct to which it prompts, than is that of most of the special affections with which it might be brought into comparison—ambition, for instance, or the love of reputation; for not only are benevolence and goodwill accompanied by much fewer dissatisfactions and disappointments and uneasy and jealous pains than are pride and ambition, but also benevolence and the sense of doing good to others, besides being a very direct source of innocent and even intense pleasure in themselves, are specially favourable to that equable and expansive temper of mind, that self-satisfaction, which, if not identical with happiness, makes undoubtedly no small factor in it. All experience and an almost universal testimony are in favour of such a view. To this consideration those who believe in a benevolent and omnipotent God may add, "that they consider themselves as acting in the view of an Infinite Being, who is in a much higher sense the object of reverence and love than all the world besides; and therefore they could have no more enjoyment from a wicked action done under His eye than the person to whom they are making their apology[1] could, if all mankind were the spectators of it; and that the satisfaction of approving themselves to His unerring judgment, to whom they thus refer all their actions, is a more continued, settled satisfaction than any this world can afford; as also, that they have, no less than others, a mind free and open to all the common, innocent gratifications of it, such as they are. And if we

[1] *I.e.* those who preach selfishness.

go no further, does there appear any absurdity in this?"[1]

In the second Sermon on the Love of our Neighbour, Butler attempts more precisely to determine the place which benevolence and self-love should respectively hold in the good man's character. In the first place, he points out that the love of our neighbour does not mean so much a general benevolence towards all mankind (which is only too apt to assume a somewhat watery character), as the recognition of those special duties and special relations which have reference to "that part of the universe, that part of mankind, that part of our country, which comes under our immediate notice, acquaintance, and influence, and with which we have to do."[2] Secondly, that there is no possible danger or likelihood of men being so carried away by benevolence and goodwill to others as to be neglectful of their own interests, or indifferent to that happiness which must always remain a man's own first concern. And thirdly, when the apostle says that every other commandment is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself"[3] (which Butler regards as equivalent to the assertion that to love our neighbour as ourselves includes all other virtues), what is meant is—that a true love of our neighbour would certainly dictate those virtues of temperance, sobriety, and moderation in sensual pleasures which we are apt to regard as in a peculiar sense personal and self-regarding, and that thus love of our neighbour becomes in a way identical with love of ourselves. Finally, benevolence runs up into piety. For, in so far as we believe God to be good, so far, when we are doing good to others, shall we feel ourselves to be fellow-workers with God, and we shall love in Him the perfect

[1] Sermon XI. § 14. [2] Sermon XII. § 2. [3] Rom. xiii. 9.

exemplification of a principle which we approve in ourselves and admire as we see it exercised by our fellow-men. "Thus morality and religion, virtue and piety, will at last necessarily coincide, run up into one and the same point, and love will be in all senses the end of the commandment."[1] The sermon passes at its conclusion into this beautiful prayer, which, as it shows Butler at his best, I shall not hesitate to quote. "O Almighty God, inspire us with this divine principle; kill in us all the seeds of envy and ill-will; and help us, by cultivating within ourselves the love of our neighbour, to improve in the love of Thee. Thou hast placed us in various kindreds, friendships, and relations as the school of discipline for our affections; help us by the due exercise of them to improve to perfection, till all partial affection be lost in that entire universal one, and Thou, O God, shalt be all in all."[2]

The identification or reconcilement of the claims of self-love and benevolence, of love of self and love of others, has ever proved a standing difficulty in moral philosophy. Plato and Aristotle both of them tried their hand on the problem. Plato said boldly that self-love can only realise its end through love of others; almost in the words of our Lord Himself he held that he who would save his life must lose it, that it is only so far as we fulfil all the duties that are incumbent upon us as citizens of the state, that we fully realise ourselves, or can grow to our full moral stature. Aristotle said much the same in different language. He found the reconciliation of the two in that the highest form of self-love prescribed that we should seek the beautiful; and the highest kind of moral beauty consisted in seeking to do good deeds to our fellow-citizens, and even in being the occasion of others doing good deeds rather than in doing them ourselves.[3] In perus-

[1] Sermon XII. § 23. [2] Sermon XII. § 24. [3] *N. Eth.* ix. 8.

ing Butler's attempted reconcilement we seem at first to be standing on a lower level than had been reached by his predecessors. To attempt to defend unselfishness on selfish grounds seems a fruitless and unprofitable task; and to attempt to persuade people to be careful of the happiness of others, for the reason that by doing so they will best care for their own, seems at once paradoxical and ineffective. But then, in the first place, we must remember that Butler is seeking to get a hearing for public spirit and benevolence by making, as he says,[1] "all possible concessions to the favourite passion, which hath so much allowed to it, and whose cause is so universally pleaded; it shall be treated with the utmost tenderness and concern for its interests." And, in the second place, we must observe that he is addressing himself to an age which he genuinely believed to be incapable of being appealed to by any higher motive, an age in which it is necessary to insist upon such considerations, in order "to obviate that scorn which one sees rising upon the faces of people who are said to know the world, when mention is made of a disinterested, generous, or public-spirited action."[2] Whether even under these circumstances he adopted the more excellent way in lowering his appeal to the level of those for whom he wrote, and to whom he preached, it is not for us to decide; certain it is that he himself was actuated by far nobler principles and far different motives, and these he ultimately never neglects or ignores, though he may allow them for a time to drop out of sight.

3. We come next to that which is the very pith and core of Butler's doctrine, and that with which his name is most intimately associated—his account of "reflection" or "conscience." This forms the subject of the larger part of the Preface, and of Sermons II. and III.

[1] Sermon XI. § 2. [2] Preface, § 32.

Adopting language introduced originally by the Stoics, and finding some sanction in the writings of St. Paul, which had become an ordinary mode of expression in his own day, he makes virtue consist in "following nature," and vice in a deviation from it. But then, what do we, or rather, what ought we, to mean by this phrase "following nature"? There are three senses in which the term nature is commonly employed. (1) We speak of any affection, passion, or propension as "natural" which is found to prevail universally, or very widely, among mankind. "Thus the passion of anger, and the affection of parents to their children, would be called equally 'natural.'" But "as the same person hath often contrary principles, which at the same time draw contrary ways, he may by the same action both follow and contradict his nature in this sense of the word; he may follow one passion and contradict another."[1] If we use, therefore, the terms "nature" and "natural" in this sense, the following of nature can furnish no guide at all in conduct. But (2) we may employ the word to denote that passion or principle which in a given instance may happen to be the strongest; and since our evil passions are often the strongest, in this sense we may speak of vice as being natural and of men as being naturally vicious. It is in this sense that St. Paul uses the word when he speaks of the Gentiles as being "by nature" the children of wrath.[2] But (3) what we most properly mean by nature is "the constitution of man as a whole"; and in framing the idea of what this constitution is, it is impossible to leave out of account the relation in which the different parts of it stand to one another. What this relation is, is, like other matters of fact, to be determined by observation and experience. But it is obvious that one, and perhaps the principal, of these relations is that

[1] Sermon II. § 7. [2] Sermon II. § 8.

some of the principles entering into or composing our nature are superior, others inferior; some are higher, others lower. To take one instance, self-love is clearly a superior principle to any single passion or propension. To run counter to the dictates of self-love at the bidding of any single lower passion or impulse, we should all feel to be an act disproportionate to man's nature, and so properly to be described as "unnatural"; while to forego the gratification of our appetites at the bidding of self-love would appear, on the contrary, perfectly natural and appropriate.[1] Now, if self-love be thus a superior principle in man's nature, superior to all the particular appetites, passions, and affections by which, from time to time, he is moved and swayed, much more does this notion of ultimate superiority and authority attach to the principle of reflection or conscience. "This principle distinguishes between the internal principles of man's heart as well as his external actions; it passes judgment upon himself and them; it pronounces determinately some actions to be, in themselves, just, right, good; others to be in themselves evil, wrong, unjust; without being consulted, without being advised with, it magisterially exerts itself, and approves or condemns him, the doer of them, accordingly; and if not forcibly stopped, it naturally and always, of course, goes on to anticipate a higher and more effectual sentence, which shall hereafter second and affirm its own."[2] But further, we observe that these attributes of prerogative and authority form part of our very notion of the faculty itself; they are inseparable from it. The faculty is "in kind and in nature supreme over all others, and bears its own authority of being so."[3] "When passion or appetite prevail we recognise it as mere 'usurpation'; conscience remains in nature and kind their superior; and every instance of the prevalence of

[1] Sermon II. § 15. [2] Sermon II. § 10. [3] Sermon II. § 11.

passion we regard as an instance of breaking in upon, or violation of, the constitution of man." "Thus that principle, by which we survey, and either affirm or disapprove our own heart, temper, and actions is not only to be considered as what is in turn to have some influence, which may be said of every passion, of the lowest appetites; but likewise as being superior, as from its very nature manifestly claiming superiority over all others, insomuch that you cannot form a notion of this faculty, conscience, without taking in judgment, direction, superintendency. This is a constituent part of the idea, that is, of the faculty itself; and to preside and govern, from the very economy and constitution of man, belongs to it. Had it strength, as it has right; had it power, as it has manifest authority; it would absolutely govern the world."[1] The general conclusion which Butler draws is as follows: "From all these things put together nothing can be more evident than that, exclusive of revelation, man cannot be considered as a creature left by his Maker to act at random, and live at large up to the extent of his natural power, as passion, humour, wilfulness happen to carry him, which is the condition brute creatures are in; but that from his make, constitution, or nature he is in the strictest and most proper sense a law to himself. He hath the rule of right within; what is wanting is only that he honestly attend to it."[2]

But granted conscience or reflection holds, and has a right to hold, the supreme and authoritative position in human nature which Butler here assigns to it, we have still to ask ourselves the question—Can we accept it as an infallible or even as a satisfactory guide? Butler's answer is "Yes." "The inquiries which have been made by men of leisure after some general rule, the conformity to or disagreement from which should denom-

[1] Sermon II. § 19. [2] Sermon III. § 3.

inate our actions good or evil, are in many respects of great service. Yet let any plain, honest man, before he engages in any course of action, ask himself, 'Is this I am going about right, or is it wrong? Is it good, or is it evil?' I do not in the least doubt but that this question would be answered agreeably to truth and virtue by almost any fair man, in almost any circumstance."[1]

Two exceptions, indeed, he recognises: conscience is apt to be led astray by superstition in some instances, and by self-partiality in others. Of the former misleading influence he does not speak at any length; he probably thought that enough, and perhaps more than enough, had been made of it by his contemporaries. Of self-partiality he treats at large in the sermon on the character of Balaam,[2] and in that on Self-deceit.[3] He observes, in the first place, what a common defect this is,—so common that there are very few who wholly escape from it. It takes many different forms —blinding us sometimes as to our true character as a whole, but more often misleading us in the case of some particular act, some particular course of conduct. Thus, through partiality, we exempt our own acts from the categories of our moral judgment, and perpetually represent our conduct to be something different from what, did we see it in another, we should at once perceive it to be. And not only does this self-partiality blind us to the true nature of our own character and conduct, it sometimes even leads us to condone vices in others when they are of a kind for which we have a predilection ourselves. And yet the self-deception is never quite complete. There frequently appears a suspicion that all is not right or as it should be; and perhaps there is always at bottom somewhat of this sort.[4] But this being so, it is always possible to be on

[1] Sermon III. § 4.
[2] Sermon VII.
[3] Sermon X.
[4] Sermon X. § 13.

our guard, to be honest with ourselves, and, by so doing, escape that which is the worst of all evils, that self-delusion which "undermines the whole principle of good; which darkens that light, that candle of the Lord within, which is to direct our steps, and corrupts conscience, which is the guide of life."[1]

Various objections have been taken at different times to Butler's doctrine of conscience. We will consider the three chief of them.

The first relates to the coherence and consistency of Butler's own system. It has been urged that while Butler posits the existence certainly of two, and perhaps of three, "superior" principles in human nature, he has made no effort to adjust their claims or determine their relationships. Self-love often, and sometimes benevolence, are spoken of by him as "superior" principles in our nature,—how are we to conceive of these as related to conscience? In spite of one unguarded passage, in which he says, "Let it be allowed though virtue or moral rectitude does consist in affection to and pursuit of what is right and good as such, yet that when we sit down in a cool hour we can neither justify to ourselves this or any other pursuit till we are convinced that it will be to our happiness, or at least not contrary to it";[2] and so apparently makes the obligation of listening to conscience depend on its conduciveness to happiness; yet there is no doubt that, in the main, Butler's position is just the opposite of this. He contends that if self-interest and conscience do ever collide,—and the occasions on which they may even seem to do so will always be very rare,—then the claims of conscience are paramount; and self-interest will always have to bow before, and recognise its superior in, conscience. Such a passage as the following is decisive on this point. "This gives us," he says, "a further view of the nature of man,

[1] Sermon X. § 19. [2] Sermon XI. § 21, *fin.*

shows us what course of life we were made for; and not only that our real nature leads us to be influenced in some degree by reflection and conscience; but likewise in what degree we are to be influenced by it, if we will fall in with and act agreeably to the constitution of our nature; that this faculty was placed within to be our proper governor; to direct and regulate all under principles, passions, and motives of action. This is its right and office; thus sacred is its authority. And how often soever men violate and rebelliously refuse to listen to it, for *supposed interest which they cannot otherwise obtain*, or for the sake of passion which they cannot otherwise gratify, this makes no alteration as to the natural right or office of conscience."[1] Notice here that conscience is recognised as equally supreme whether confronted by the promptings of passion or the dictates of a supposed self-interest. In fact, Butler held self-interest and conscience can never clash,—to obey our conscience must always be our highest interest; but when they seem to point in different directions, then self-love must yield to conscience.

A second objection which is urged is that the doctrine involves an argument in a circle. If you ask what is right?—the answer must be that which conscience approves, and wrong that which it disapproves; and if you ask again, what is it that conscience approves?—the answer can only be, that it approves the right, and that what it disapproves is the wrong.[2] But is it not the very nature of all ultimate and immediate judgments—and Butler's contention is that the verdicts of conscience are both ultimate and immediate—is it not the very condition of such judgments to be exposed to the reproach of being arguments in a circle? The very meaning of an ultimate judgment is

[1] Sermon II. § 19. The italics are not in the original.
[2] Leslie Stephen, *English Thought*, vol. ii. p. 51.

that we can give no further reason for the verdict which it pronounces. An act of ingratitude, or an ungrateful temper, strikes us as mean and wrong, and there is an end of it; just as a deed of generosity or an act of heroism appeals to us as noble, virtuous, and praiseworthy. Behind this we cannot get, and there is no need to do so. We may explain with more or less probability how man has come to acquire this consciousness of right and wrong, but the consciousness itself remains an ultimate fact

But then, does this forbid us to recognise the possibility of any growth or development in the conscience or moral sense? The question had not arisen in Butler's time, and no answer to it is consequently to be found in him; indeed, he seems to assume that conscience in all men, whose judgment is not perverted by self-partiality, is one and the same; that there are in the judgments of conscience no variations, and no possibility of growth. That was the unhistorical eighteenth century way of regarding the matter. But if we may attempt to answer the question for ourselves, I think we may say that an intuitive moral judgment may still be capable of growth. Let us take a case or two and see how this may be. That which the moral sense approves of as an end ultimately right, and in itself good and desirable, is the doing good to others, *i.e.* increasing the sum of their happiness, and still more the promotion of their moral excellence, the improvement of their character. Now, in the first place, there is clearly room for development in the interpretation which we put upon the word "others." A savage, while despising and disapproving the purely selfish and heartless character, will yet interpret the sphere of duty in a very narrow way; "others" for him will mean at most his own family, his friends, and possibly his tribe. But gradually the horizon widens, till country takes the

place of his tribe, and finally even mankind may in a few choice spirits take the place of country. So, too, our judgment of particular acts and types of character will vary as we come more clearly to recognise, through the teaching of experience, the bearing which such acts and such characters are likely to have upon the moral well-being of society. The underlying principles which we approve or disapprove in the acts or characters remain the same, but reason and experience tend to modify the interpretation we shall give to these principles. As it is with the collective conscience of the nation or race, so is it to a large extent with the consciences of individuals. These, too, gain by the teaching of experience. To both alike new duties or new forms of duty are propounded by the great moral teachers of mankind,—and the teachings so propounded are accepted by the consciences of those to whom they are addressed, or rejected by them; and, if accepted, profoundly modify the moral consciousness of all who come after them. But had not men some ultimate power of judging of rightness and wrongness in principles, in actions, and in character, to what could new teachings address their appeal, how should we judge of the doctrines propounded to us? How could we pronounce the moral teaching of Christianity to be right, that of Mahomet in the main wrong? That we do not consciously judge of actions and characters merely as they are "useful" or the reverse is sufficiently obvious; but if so, does it not necessarily follow that we must have some internal faculty, call it conscience, moral sense, practical reason, or what you like, by the use of which we frame our moral judgments?

But thirdly, it is objected to Butler's doctrine of conscience that he does not explain what the nature of the faculty is; still less does he attempt to give any account of its origin. To some extent, it must be allowed, the

objection is well founded. Butler, for instance, leaves it very vague whether he regards conscience as a form of reason or of emotion, or as containing an element of both. The term "reflection," which he often uses as synonymous with "conscience," seems to suggest that it is connected with the reason, nor does he hesitate to speak of conscience as a reasonable principle; but, on the other hand, the stress which he lays on conscience as approving and disapproving, on the pain which an evil conscience inflicts upon us, on the pleasure which we derive from a good one, shows that he recognises an element of emotion as included in the ideal of it as well as an element of reason. But this vagueness was probably not undesigned. He felt sure that all would understand what he meant by the words "reflection" and "conscience"; and the question whether it was a form of the reason or a phase of emotion, or a combination of both, did not really affect the position which he wished to assign to it or the authority he claimed for it. Such questions seemed only likely, if propounded, to draw off people's attention from the main issue. In fact, the question has never been, even to this day, satisfactorily settled. When Kant speaks of the "practical reason" as a form of reason distinct from the theoretical, or tells us that reason speaks to us in moral matters with a "categorical imperative," what is he doing but practically admitting that in this sphere reason comes to us tinged with emotion, and no longer addresses us in the same cold tones in which it addresses us when it tells us what is truth? Or again, when Hume complains that Clarke and his school are in their moral reasonings always substituting what "ought to be" for what "is," his criticism amounts to this, that it is impossible to treat morals as mere matters of fact; that there is an element which any statement of them as mere matters of fact fails to account for or justify.

Thus we shall consider it not so much an objection to Butler's system as a sign of his wisdom, that he refuses to be led into the interminable question whether conscience is more properly described as a form of reason or of emotion, but contents himself instead with pointing to it as an indubitable fact in our nature, a fact which no one could reasonably gainsay or misunderstand.

And when it is further objected, as is often done, that he attempts to give no account of the origin or development of conscience, something like the same answer must be made: it was not his business or his interest to do so. To conscience as an existing fact, to the authority which it claimed, and claimed as constituting a part of its very idea and as inseparable from itself, he could appeal, and appeal with confidence; these were matters which were within the cognisance of all, or almost all, his readers. Every one knows he has a conscience, and is conscious of acting sometimes in such a way as to merit and receive its approval, sometimes so as to draw down its disapproval and to be tortured with the pains of remorse. To most of his readers it seems, further, a natural inference, a fair interpretation of the facts of consciousness, that conscience speaks to them with no arbitrary voice, but as the mouthpiece of a principle of eternal righteousness; in other words, it is the viceroy of God Himself, —"if not forcibly stopped, it naturally and always, of course, goes on to anticipate a higher and more effectual sentence, which shall hereafter second and affirm its own."[1] But to enter on the question how we came by such a faculty or power is to leave the region of fact and to enter on that of speculation, and speculation of a particularly difficult and uncertain kind,—a speculation, we may further observe, which has been, and will always be, largely determined by the view which

[1] Sermon II. § 10.

we take of the precise nature of the phenomena whose nature is to be explained. No doubt, the question of origin throws in its turn some light upon the nature of the faculty. Thus the view that conscience, as Mr. Leslie Stephen would have us believe, represents nothing more than the aggregate of those principles and maxims which the unconscious lessons of experience and the working of evolution have taught men in general, or rather, particular races of mankind, to regard as necessary to the health, well-being, or permanence of society; while it certainly would tend to diminish in most men their reverence for the promptings of conscience, seems also to leave out some of the most essential features of conscience itself, and could not be accepted as an adequate explanation by any one who fully recognised its dignity and authority. Why should I feel *obliged*, it might be asked, to listen to the promptings of a conscience thus evolved? How could its dictates inspire me with the reverence which I actually feel for the moral law as interpreted by my own actual consciousness? No doubt, if you believe the evolution of society to be itself the work of a Divine power or principle, you read back into conscience some of the elements of which your account of its origin has otherwise emptied it; but this seems to be getting by an indirect path to that belief in a God which is much more directly reached by a true and adequate analysis of the data furnished by conscience itself. The point, then, to which we are brought round is this, that while Butler might perhaps have strengthened his position in some points by tracing the genesis of conscience and following up its natural history, it was by no means incumbent on him, and it would have been practically impossible for him, writing when he did, to adopt this course. He has a perfect right to assume conscience as an existing fact of human nature,

and if he has not misrepresented its character, or read into it elements not really to be found in it, his argument remains unrefuted, even though he has failed to prove the inadequacy of theories which had not then been promulgated, theories which derive part of their plausibility from their omitting some features in the complex result which they are put forward to explain.

4. Butler's doctrine of conscience leads up to and culminates in his doctrine of the love of God; his teachings on morality thus find their climax in religion. That they should do so Butler assumes as inevitable; and in so arguing he was but reflecting the general opinion of his age. Where he differed from his contemporaries was not in assuming that reason and conscience led directly to a belief in God, but partly as to the character of the God to whose existence he believed they pointed, and partly as to the attitude towards Him which he regards it as reasonable for man to adopt. Butler assumes that the God whom conscience reveals to us is the perfect expression or impersonation of that moral law which we find written in our hearts; the absolute embodiment of all those qualities which we feel ought to prevail in ourselves, and which call forth our enthusiastic admiration as we contemplate them when exemplified in our fellow-men. God was thus to Butler no mere "first cause" called in by speculative intellect to give a rational groundwork to the universe. He was a Person, and a Person endowed with the perfection of all moral qualities. Nothing short of the assumption of such a Person as the central, underlying, creative, and governing principle of the universe seems, he urges, to satisfy the aspirations of the human heart or the requirements of the human conscience and reason. But if this be so, then a Being who exhibits in absolute perfection

all those moral qualities which we most approve of in ourselves, and most admire and reverence in others, cannot but be an object of reverence, affection, and love on the part of all those who admire and reverence such qualities. Our hearts cannot but warm to such a Person; it is impossible for them to be cold and indifferent to Him. And further, the consideration and knowledge that such a Person is our proper guardian and governor would much more bring these objects and qualities home to ourselves; teach us they had a greater respect to us in particular, that we had a higher interest in that wisdom and power and goodness. We shall with joy, gratitude, reverence, love, trust, and dependence appropriate the character as what we have a right in, and make our boast in such our relation to it. "As the whole attention of life should be to obey His commands; so the highest enjoyment of it must arise from the contemplation of this character, and our relation to it, from a consciousness of His favour and approbation, and from the exercise of those affections towards Him which could not but be gained from His presence."[1] And again: "Thus Almighty God is the natural object of the several affections; love, reverence, fear, desire of approbation.[2] All centre in Him as their object. He calls them all out; and we can thus worship Him with an unselfish worship, and find in Him the suitable and adequate object on which our deepest feelings can repose. Very different from this was the ordinary attitude of Butler's contemporaries towards God. Gratitude they might feel towards Him, as one who had conferred favours upon them in the past; hope and fear they might entertain towards Him as the dispenser of rewards and punishment, of happiness and misery alike in this world and the next; but so far had the very notion of His

[1] Sermon XIII. § 10. [2] *Ibid.* § 17.

being a proper object for reverence and love disappeared from among them, that Butler devotes the whole of the Thirteenth Sermon to show that such feelings can rationally be entertained towards Him, and that He is the natural object to excite them. So very reasonable had religion in those days become "as to have nothing to do with the heart and affections, if those words signify anything but the faculty by which we discern speculative truth."[1]

Characteristically enough, Butler pronounces resignation, which he defines as "a combination of fear, hope, and love," to be the special attitude appropriate to a being, circumstanced like man, towards the Divine Being. "Resignation to the will of God is the whole of piety; it includes in it all that is good, and is a source of the most settled quiet and composure of mind."[2] The foundation for such a temper is laid, he holds, in the natural readiness which almost all men have, to acquiesce in the absence of advantages which seem inappropriate to the condition in which they find themselves actually placed; but this natural tendency only rises into true resignation when it is coupled with the belief that the dispensation of things under which we exist is the work of an All-good as well as an All-powerful Governor. When such a belief is present and active, then mere acquiescence in the inevitable becomes joyful and trustful acceptance of what is ordained, a conviction that at bottom it is good, and for the best alike for ourselves and for the whole or system of which we are a part; and this is the temper of true resignation. But while resignation is the right temper for those who are circumstanced as men are on earth, we may look forward, urges Butler, to a higher measure of the fruition of God's presence hereafter. Not only may

[1] Sermon XIII. § 1. [2] Sermon XIV. § 3.

we be then able to enter into the plans and laws which we can apprehend at most only partially now, but we may also contemplate directly the wisdom which plans and the goodness which orders them, and may become acquainted even in some more intimate way with Him who is the author of them, in whom that wisdom and that goodness fully reside. Then "shall we know even as also we are known." In that "beatific vision," when in no fanciful sense we shall be "beholding all things in God," our nature may find that full content and perfect satisfaction which on earth we are conscious we never attain.[1]

The two sermons are interesting not only because they carry out and complete Butler's moral doctrine, nor only also because they shadow forth various lines of thought which were afterwards worked out more fully in the *Analogy*; but still more because of the noble and elevated protest they contain against the view of a future life which was generally prevalent in the earlier part of the eighteenth century. The notions formed of heaven and hell were still of the crudest and most material kind. Heaven and hell were valued most, even by orthodox divines, as sanctions for morality which appealed strongly to the imaginations of the common people, which were "useful," and perhaps indispensable, in order to procure respect for the ethical code. As Mr. Leslie Stephen points out, Paley is the typical example of the moralists (and we may add also of the divines) who enjoyed the greatest reputation throughout the eighteenth century. In the "theological utilitarianism" which they profess, "heaven and hell are the weights which work the great machine of the universe, so far as it has any moral significance, and love of pleasure and fear of pain are the passions through which they

[1] Sermon XIV. §§ 10 and 19.

act."[1] To such a system the spirit of Butler, though in places he seems to bow to it, remains on the whole essentially opposed. Goodness and virtue are for him intrinsically good and valuable, apart from any happiness they may bring in their train; to them our nature corresponds; in the contemplation of them, as exhibited in Him who is the Author and Cause of all things, it can find a satisfaction and delight which will give it that perfect content which no other kind of pleasure can equally supply. And the opposite to all this holds good of evil. It is bad in itself, not merely because it brings pain; our nature at bottom feels a repulsion to it and loathes it; and the shame and pain of having done evil, in any nature capable of reformation, remain at once the severest penalty for the evil we have done and the best earnest of an ultimate remedy. On the fate of the hopelessly and incurably bad neither he nor we are called upon to pronounce.

5. The last of the sermons, that upon the Ignorance of Man, must be regarded as a sort of prelude to the *Analogy*, of which, indeed, it contains the most fundamental argument. This sermon shows that Butler, before he gave up his preachership at the Rolls, had already entered on that train of thought to which he gave adequate and complete expression in the *Analogy*, though this was not, however, published till ten years later. There was much in the circumstances of the time to call attention to what constitutes the theme of the sermon, the Ignorance of Man. The discoveries of Copernicus, and still more of Newton, while they had enlarged, almost beyond precedent, the boundaries of human knowledge, had emphasised, at least in an equal degree, the depths of human ignorance. They had given man a conception, vast

[1] *English Thought*, vol. ii. p. 124. Locke at an earlier date had taught the same doctrine, Essay I. ii. §§ 6, 12, 13; II. xxviii. §§ 5, 6.

beyond all previous imagination, of the extent of the universe, and had taught him how small a part our world, and consequently still more man himself, must play in the economy of the whole. The enemies of religion had not been slow to point the argument which this enlarged conception of the universe suggested, against the possibility of a superintending Providence, and still more of a revelation. How, they had asked, is it possible to believe that a God, who is the creator and governor of so stupendous a whole, can concern Himself with the affairs of man, or can have made any special revelation of Himself to so insignificant a being? Why should He thus choose a favoured few to be the special recipients of His grace? It was some such underlying thought as this which prompted and gave its strength to Deism both in its positive and in its negative form. But Butler perceived that the weapon furnished by the extent of man's ignorance was really double-edged; and that it might be used no less effectively against the objectors to, than against the supporters of, religion. For if man lives in such a remote and unimportant corner of the universe as science now relegates him to, how certain is it that he can form at most a very imperfect and inadequate notion of the scheme of the universe as a whole, and of the ends to which it is directed. But without some such idea of the governing principle of the universe as a whole, how little is man in a position to criticise any of the details of the arrangements of the world in which he lives. How evident is it that to one thus circumstanced many apparent difficulties in the arrangements must present themselves, many things appear "to which objection may reasonably be taken!" Nor need it surprise us that man should have been put, or left, in such a condition of ignorance. For carrying on his own

concerns he has been given sufficient light, and has been furnished with sufficient guidance to show him what are the lines on which his conduct should be directed. "He cannot, if he uses his faculties, mistake where his happiness or his duty lies." But there are many things which he has to take on trust and cannot fully understand. That this should be so forms part, indeed, of his probation. "Difficulties in speculation as much come into the notion of a state of probation as difficulties in practice; and so the same reason or account is to be given of both."[1] For the strict discharge of our duty with less sensible evidence may produce a better character, than the same diligence in discharge of it upon more sensible evidence.

One practical conclusion which Butler draws from these considerations many will find open to question. The narrowness of the limits within which human knowledge is confined makes it clear, in his judgment, that the acquisition of knowledge could not have been intended as the ultimate goal and end of human life. "But it is evident that there is another mark set up for us to aim at; another end appointed us to direct our lives to; an end which the most knowing may fail of and the most ignorant arrive at. . . . Socrates was not the first who endeavoured to draw men off from labouring after, and laying stress upon, other knowledge in comparison of that which related to morals. Our province is virtue and religion, life and manners; the science of improving the temper and making the heart better. This is the field assigned us to cultivate; how much it has lain neglected is indeed astonishing. Virtue is demonstrably the happiness of man; it consists in good actions, proceeding from a good principle, temper, or heart. Overt acts are entirely in our power. What remains is that we learn to keep our heart; to govern

[1] Sermon XV. § 8.

and regulate our passions, mind, affections, that so we may be free from the impotencies of fear, envy, malice, covetousness, ambition; that we may be clear of these considered as vices seated in the heart, considered as constituting a general wrong temper; from which general wrong frame of mind all the mistaken pursuits, and far the greatest part of the unhappiness of life, proceed. He who should find out one rule to assist us in this work would deserve infinitely better of mankind than all the improvers of other knowledge put together."[1] The sentiment is certainly exaggerated; the last statement is, I think, even doubtfully true. Moral rules, and even systems of morals, have had less practical value than might be expected of them; sermons will not avail, alas, always to make, or to keep, men virtuous; growing knowledge has done much for the material well-being, and so for the true happiness of mankind: it has helped to improve in many ways the external conditions of life, and so the life lived under those conditions. And yet there is a kernel of truth, after all, in the bishop's teaching; the life still remains more than meat, and the body than raiment; we may still ask—What is a man profited should he gain the whole world and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? The lesson is one which needs greatly to be brought home to an age which mistakes instruction for education; and shouts over the discovery of a new comet or new element, or an accelerated mode of travelling, as if it was some certain and permanent addition to human happiness and human well-being.

[1] Sermon XV. §§ 14, 15.

CHAPTER IV

THE DEISTS AND THE DEISTICAL CONTROVERSY

EVERY great work, and the *Analogy* among the rest, is determined and limited not only by the bent of the author's genius, but also by the circumstances and conditions of the author's own time. If this is true of all writings, necessarily most true is it of writings of an apologetic character. The objections which such writings are intended to meet must, if the answers to them are to have any worth or reality, be the objections actually felt and expressed by the writer's own contemporaries, and those which are actually current in the society in which he moves. It would have been impossible for Butler, who was the most real of men, to meet any but real objections; objections, that is, which were actually experienced, and which had real weight and influence with the men who were his own contemporaries and associates. And so we find, as a matter of fact, that, as Mr. Pattison puts it, "the *Analogy* furnishes a sort of summary of the deistical controversy. There is probably not a single argument advanced on the deistical side which Butler has not pondered, and to which he has not furnished something of an answer."[1] But if this be so it is obviously impossible to understand the *Analogy*, or even to study it to advantage if we have not informed ourselves of the main deistical positions and of the arguments by which

[1] Pattison's *Essays*, Essay I. Above, Chap. II. pp. 59, 60.

from time to time the deists attempted to establish those positions.

The distinctive note, as Mr. Pattison has also pointed out, of the eighteenth century is that it is an age of rationalism—an age, that is, which professes to rest and justify all its beliefs on grounds of strict reason; one which was unwilling to admit or accept any beliefs which could not be so justified. Of this general characteristic of the time the Deists were the most advanced and consistent exponents. Various causes had combined to impress upon the age its rationalistic character. The beliefs of the preceding century had, as we have already seen, become outworn; but when beliefs are no longer held with full conviction, men begin to try and justify them, and the attempt to justify involves of itself an appeal to reason. The revolt from Rome, again, had shaken authority to its very base; and the appeal to reason took the place which the dethronement of authority had left vacant. After the Restoration, again, the Church of England attempted to substitute a joint appeal to antiquity and scripture for the simpler appeal to authority made then, as ever, by the Church of Rome. But the appeal itself was, as compared with the pretensions of the Church of Rome, a reasonable appeal; and in the controversies between the two Churches reason had to be called in as the ultimate arbitrator in the strife. The Protestant sects, in their attacks upon the Church of England, or in their controversies with one another, had necessarily to resort to the same court; and all of these in theory, though not in fact, recognised the decision of reason as final. Thus from every side the sway of reason seemed to be proclaimed.

There were two other influences which told in the same direction. The progress of geographical discovery, and particularly the opening up of the vast Chinese Empire, had made men ask themselves the

question, whether it was possible that God had left Himself without witness among so many millions of mankind; and the only possible answer seemed to be, that in providing men with reason He had provided them, in the absence of a direct revelation, with at least the possibility of a knowledge of Himself. And then, once more, the acceptance of the Copernican system of astronomy dethroning the earth, man's habitation, from its position as centre of the universe, had rendered some modification of the hitherto accepted religious system inevitable; and this seemed again to instal reason as the final arbiter of what is to be accepted, what rejected, and to give to it a position supreme over that even of faith itself.

Deism, then, must be regarded as an attempt to settle the relations between faith and reason; or rather, as an attempt to assert the claims of reason as against those of faith. We can trace four different stages in the history of the process. These stages were by no means always successive,—they were often contemporaneous; but there existed, if not a chronological, still a logical succession between them. In the first stage reason took faith under its protection. It tried to show that faith, or at anyrate the faith of Christendom, could be justified on grounds of reason. This stage is best represented in Locke's book, *The Reasonableness of Christianity*. There is as yet no conscious antagonism between faith and reason; only those parts of Christianity which seem to transcend reason are slurred over or ignored. In the second stage the conflict between faith and reason begins to make itself felt; and reason sets up a claim to reject such parts of the Christian religion as cannot be directly justified at its bar. The position taken up by Toland in his work *Christianity not Mysterious*, is that not only are there no truths in Christianity contrary to reason, but there are

equally none above it.[1] He seems to imply, though he does not very clearly state, that the truths of Christianity which would ordinarily be regarded as above reason form no part of its essence, and may properly be rejected. Of the third stage, the writings of Dr. Samuel Clarke and Tindal may be taken as typical. In this stage reason constructs a system which is independent of historical Christianity altogether. Christianity is then either accepted as furnishing an external sanction for the conclusions, which reason has previously reached—the position assigned it by Clarke; or is expressly rejected as superfluous, and therefore incredible, as was done by Tindal. In the last stage reason takes up a position of frank hostility to historical religion, attempting to show either that its doctrines are in themselves incredible or immoral, or that they are supported by no trustworthy and sufficient evidence. The writings of Blount in earlier days; of Collins, Morgan, Annet, and Chubb later on, may be cited as specimens of Deism in this its most developed stage.

It will be desirable to dwell more at length on each of these stages in contemporary Deism, since the *Analogy* sums up the whole controversy, and is designed as a compendious answer to every form of objection. But it is also necessary to remember, if we would appreciate Butler's great work aright, that it attempts even more than this, and seeks to meet not only the formal statements of recognised opponents embodied in their books, but also the difficulties current in popular thought, difficulties which often formed the subject of conversation in social gatherings of all kinds,—in the drawing-rooms of the rich, the coffee-taverns of the wits, and even the alehouses frequented by the poor.

1. Locke's *Reasonableness of Christianity* was published in 1695. The position which he takes up in this book

[1] *Christianity not Mysterious*, § 1.

is a perfectly simple and clear one. Locke, anxious to ascertain for himself what the teaching of Christianity precisely was, determined, he tells us, to study the New Testament afresh at first hand for his own information. He found that the central doctrine contained in it was Justification by Faith, and that the faith that justifies was the faith that Jesus is the Divine Messiah.

The doctrine of the Incarnation receives no prominence, perhaps even holds no place, in Locke's system. Yet he does not deny it; and we may say almost with certainty, he would not have done so. It simply seems to him not the important aspect of our Lord's mission and teaching. What was important was that Christ appeared as the authoritative promulgator of a perfect moral code; His right to promulgate it with authority was attested by miracles, while the perfection of the code itself was proved by its being in perfect accordance with the highest dictates of human reason. But if Christianity did but confirm the best conclusions which unassisted human reason could have reached, what, it might well be asked, was the importance of its promulgation? To this question Locke has a double reply. First, though human reason might, and in some favoured cases certainly did, reach the conclusions formulated in Christianity for itself; it could only do so as the result of a long and laborious train of thought. The average intelligence of mankind would certainly have failed to attain anything like such a level; and even the highest intellects, in the few cases where they had argued out for themselves the sublime truths which Christ taught, had held them combined with a large admixture of doubt and error. In the second place, it makes a world of difference (Locke holds) in point of practical effectiveness, whether a moral system is arrived at as the result of a lengthened

train of reasoning, or whether it comes to us stamped with manifest authority, attested by miracles, taking the form of commands, not of reasoned conclusions,—commands promulgated by One who claims to be the deputy of the Divine Governor of the Universe, and so brings with Him the sanctions by which such a Governor can enforce His commands.

2. With Toland[1] the rift between Christianity and Rationalism first began to declare itself. Toland was an adventurer, and not himself a person of great importance. He wished to be considered a follower of Locke, who, however, energetically repudiated him. Nor was his book one (though it showed much learning and ingenuity) which would, under ordinary circumstances, have been an epoch-making work; but it managed to express, or rather to hint, doubts and questions which were beginning to make themselves felt in many minds; and the attention which *Christianity not Mysterious* attracted is evident not only from the considerable sale which the book itself obtained, but even more from the condemnation it met with and the great crop of answers which it called forth. It was presented at the Middlesex sessions; denounced as heretical, and ordered to be burnt, by the Irish Parliament. Convocation itself thought it necessary solemnly to condemn it. It is difficult to ascertain from the book itself how far Toland was prepared to go; perhaps he did not know himself. He professed, and probably the profession was genuine, that his hope was "to make it appear that the use of reason was not so dangerous in religion as is commonly represented, and that, too, by such as mightily extol it when it seems to favour them."[2] It is the excrescences and the irrational accretions to Christianity, not Christianity itself, he tells us, that he wants to get

[1] *Christianity not Mysterious* was published in 1696.

[2] *Ibid.* Preface, p. 8.

rid of; but in paring away excrescences he seems too often to cut away by the knife of reason vital parts as well; nor had he made it apparent even to himself what was excrescence and what was vital. The main contention of the book is sufficiently indicated by its title. Toland lays it down with Locke, that there can be no knowledge, and apparently therefore no faith either, except where we can perceive the agreement or disagreement of ideas; but we can perceive the agreement or disagreement of ideas only in cases where the ideas themselves which are to be compared are clear and distinct. In subjects where we have but hazy notions we can neither affirm nor deny with any meaning; nor can we be said to believe or disbelieve in any intelligible sense.[1] Thus in belief and disbelief there can be, according to Toland, no half-lights; there is no room for vague sentiment or anything but clear-cut notions. Yet it is not necessary for affirmation or belief that we should know the "inward essence" of the objects believed in; things may be known through their properties. By a mystery we ought not to mean a truth of which we can form no clear conception, a truth which, in this sense, is above reason; but simply a truth which, once unknown, is subsequently disclosed.[2] The truths of Christianity are not in the vulgar sense mysteries,—they are neither against nor above reason; for all that we can really believe in it, as in any other system, must be, as we have seen, such truths as we can form clear ideas of, such as are intelligible and within the grasp of the human mind. But how much of the accepted Christian faith comes, we ask, within this description? Does the doctrine of the Trinity? Does the doctrine of the Incarnation itself? It was precisely this point that Toland left vague, on which he hesitates definitely to

[1] *Christianity not Mysterious*, I. chaps. ii. and iv.
[2] *Ibid.* § 3, c. i.

commit himself. That the dogmatic forms in which Christianity was expressed had often no clear and distinct ideas corresponding to them he sturdily maintains; but whether the truths which lay behind these dogmas, the truths which represent in some sense the very fundamentals of Christianity itself, whether these are liable to a similar reproach he carefully abstains from intimating. Most of his later writings would certainly justify the view that he held that they were. It is on the point that there are no truths in Christianity which can properly be described as above reason that Butler in the *Analogy* joins issue with him. Truths in Christianity contrary to reason, he says, there certainly are none. But, as a result of the limitations of human powers, reason is necessarily an imperfect judge of the *contents* of a revelation, as distinct from the evidence by which it comes recommended to us. The nature of God, and His thoughts and plans, are necessarily themes too vast for our full comprehension; they do not admit of demonstration, or even of exact definition, in the same way that mathematical ideas and mathematical theorems do; in trying to treat them, in requiring that they should be treated in such a way, we are simply ignoring and disregarding the actual limitations affixed to our human powers.

3. It seems unjust to class Dr. Samuel Clarke as a Deist. He would himself have energetically repudiated the name; and indeed he was regarded by his contemporaries as one of the most pronounced and successful opponents of the Deistical cause. Nevertheless, the rationalist spirit which breathes in his writings, and his entire subordination of revelation to reason, are so far in harmony with the prevailing tendencies of the Deistical writers as to justify Mr. Leslie Stephen in looking upon his works as marking one of the stages in the development of the Deistical mode of thought. The

writings in which his doctrines are most systematically developed are the two series of Boyle Lectures delivered in 1704 and 1705. The first of these was designated "A Demonstration of the Being and Attributes of God," the second, "A Discourse concerning the Unalterable Obligations of Natural Religion and the Truth and Certainty of the Christian Revelation." In the former of these works he develops his thesis in twelve propositions, supposed to be as irrefragable and as closely connected with one another as the propositions in Euclid. In these it is shown as a necessity of human thought that God exists, and that His existence is independent and necessary; that He is incomprehensible, eternal, infinite, and one; that He is intelligent, and so not a necessary agent, but endowed with liberty and choice; that He is omnipotent, infinitely wise, infinitely good, just, and true.[1] This sort of proof, even if it is satisfactorily made out,—and how difficult it is to judge of this may be gathered from the fact that Butler in his earliest published writing, his letters to Dr. Clarke, was inclined to regard two of Clarke's propositions as insufficiently established, and seems to have remained to the end of the correspondence not quite satisfied respecting them,—has at best extraordinarily little hold except on a very limited class of minds. To the general public such arguments are simply unintelligible; and even in the case of those exceptional minds to which they appeal they are of very little avail to stir the imagination or to influence the conduct. And moreover, so far as such proofs can be made good, they tend to render any special revelation unnecessary, and so to make its actual occurrence improbable. For in other matters, where the light of reason is sufficient, God does not seem to vouchsafe to men any special or specially-given knowledge other than that which their natural faculties, properly used, can supply.

[1] *Demonstration*, Prop. XII.

It is the difficulty here stated that Clarke is principally concerned to meet in his second treatise. But before proceeding to attempt an answer to it he proposes to define more exactly those with whom he is willing to argue. The Deists are divided into four classes. (1) There are those who believe in an eternal, infinite, independent intelligent Being who created the world; but they hold that His action was restricted to the creation of a certain amount of matter, and force or motion, and that all that has followed has been the result of this original constitution. God made, but He does not govern, the world. (2) A second class believe that God does govern, as much as He originally created, the world; but they recognise no essential and fundamental distinction between right and wrong, and so deny to Him moral attributes. (3) The third class recognise God's government, and most of God's moral attributes, but deny the immortality of the soul, and consider that God's justice and goodness may be different in kind from those of men. (4) The fourth accept all that the third believe, and recognise in addition all the obligations of morality for themselves, and the presence of moral attributes in the Divine Nature. They are Deists only in so far as they deny the need for, and so the possibility of, a revelation. It is to these last alone that Clarke addresses his arguments.[1] To them he makes answer—First, in the spirit of Locke, that a revelation is necessary to supplement and re-enforce the light of nature. All the fundamental truths of religion, all the fundamental obligations of morality, can, indeed, be apprehended by the light of nature and by man's reason, if duly exercised; but all history shows how apt men are not to exercise their reason, and how often the conclusions of pure reason are perverted by passion, prejudice, and vice. Men need, consequently,

[1] *Unalterable Obligations*, pp. 157–170.

some better and clearer light than that of reason alone to guide them on their way. Such being the need of man, it becomes at least probable that God would grant him a revelation to help him in his need. And then, secondly, Clarke held that God does many things out of condescension and goodwill to man which the laws of His nature, so to speak, fail to render necessary in Him. These are acts of condescension which it would be impossible to predict *à priori*. Clarke takes as an instance forgiveness for sin, under certain circumstances, upon repentance. The granting of a revelation may be, he urges, among such acts of condescension. In the third place, if it be objected, as it often is, that revelation has been restricted to a comparatively small portion of the human race, and has not, therefore, that universality and wide prevalence which we should expect, it may be pointed out in answer that men differ, and races also, even in their power of reasoning; that many races have, in consequence, failed to apprehend those fundamental truths which the reason of man under more favourable circumstances is fully adequate to grasp;—all men are not equal, even in their reasoning powers, nor are all angels; and if there be inequality in this way in the light of nature, there seems no reason why there should not be inequality also in the amount of revelation which God vouchsafes to different men.

By these arguments Clarke contends that, though he may not have succeeded in establishing the grant of a revelation as a necessary truth of reason, yet he has made it exceedingly probable that a revelation should be given, or at anyrate has taken away all grounds for objecting to its possibility. One cannot, however, but feel, as Mr. Leslie Stephen points out,[1] that for one who undertakes to exhibit all the fundamental truths of religion

[1] *English Thought*, vol. i. p. 128.

as demonstrative propositions, based on the necessary postulates of the human intellect, a special revelation does become in a great measure superfluous, and its possibility has to be defended by rather special pleadings; while, if the granting of a revelation is made itself a part of the necessary system, it seems hard to understand how revelation should have been so fragmentary, and have extended to so comparatively minute a portion of the whole human race. It is because Clarke's system thus adapts itself naturally to the Deist position that Mr. Stephen, in spite of Clarke's strenuous opposition to contemporary Deism, has, perhaps not unfairly, classed him among the Deistical writers, and assigned him the name of a Christian Deist.[1]

With Clarke's was generally associated the name of Wollaston, who agrees with him in the supremacy which he ascribes to human reason, in regarding the fundamental propositions both of religion and morality as demonstrative, in attaching to revelation a comparatively subordinate character, and in constructing a moral system on a purely intellectual basis. The point in which the system of Wollaston most differs from that of Clarke is in the prominence the former gives to the pain and misery observable in the universe at large, and more especially in human life; and in the stress which he lays upon this point as enforcing the doctrine of a future life as needed to redress the balance of virtue and happiness, which seems often so grievously upset in our present state of existence.

4. Tindal's work, *Christianity as old as the Creation*, is generally regarded as representing the culminating point in the Deist controversy.[2] In it the breach be-

[1] *English Thought*, vol. i. p. 129.

[2] It was published in 1730, six years before the appearance of the *Analogy*.

tween Deism and Christianity, between reason and faith, had become final and complete. Tindal, indeed, still continued to speak of himself as a Christian Deist, but in what sense he was a Christian it is hard to see. No place was left for revelation in his system, and he derided and denounced the most distinctively Christian doctrines. The main points on which he insisted are these,—God is perfectly just, wise, good, and immutable; man's nature also never varies. It follows, therefore, that the law which God lays down for man will be perfect and unalterable.[1] This law is apprehended, or is capable of being apprehended, by the reason and conscience of mankind. It is through these, that is, by the light of nature, that God makes His will known to men. But if this is so, what place is there for any special revelation, or still more for any set of positive precepts, over and above the law which, at the creation, God divulged to man's reason? What is true in revelation can thus only be a mere republication of the law of nature, for natural and revealed religion differ not in their substance but in their mode of communication; "the one being the internal, the other the external, revelation of the will of a Being who is alike at all times infinitely wise and good."[2] Thus revelation is shown to be superfluous; but it is also incredible. To suppose it had been given would be to suppose that God had favourites among mankind; and to suppose this would be to deny God's justice. And how impossible is it to think that the all-wise and all-powerful Maker of the universe should have communicated the knowledge of Himself and of His law to one small barbarous tribe inhabiting a remote corner of this earth. Further, if reason be the supreme test by which the truth or falsity of all systems is to be

[1] Leslie Stephen, *English Thought*, vol. i. chap. iii. p. 136, and Overton.

[2] *Ibid.* p. 138.

measured, then any so-called revelation must itself be tried before the tribunal of reason. But the doctrines of Judaism and Christianity, tested by the principles of reason, are both alike pronounced to be defective. Many absurd regulations were, under the Mosaic system, laid down for the conduct of life, circumcision among the rest. Some commands, reported in the Old Testament to be given by God Himself to the chosen people, *e.g.* the extermination of the tribes of Canaan, must be pronounced immoral. Even the central doctrines of Christianity, the Incarnation and Atonement, though obliquely glanced at, are sufficiently clearly hinted to be unreasonable, and so untenable. Nor can it be maintained that revelation, judged by its fruits, has been so productive of good results that men are bound to accept it on that score. The Jews, who were supposed to have had a revelation, were, on Tindal's view, far less moral than the Chinese, who had none and were content to live by the light of nature alone. Nor will he even allow any moral superiority over their predecessors to Christians and those who live under the Christian dispensation. "What impartial man," he asks, "who has compared the former and present condition of mankind, can think the world much mended since the time of Tiberius; or, though so ever well versed in Church history, can, from the conduct of Christians, find that they arrive to any higher state of perfection than the rest of mankind, who are supposed to continue in their degeneracy and corruption?"[1]

Probably, both in the first part and in the second part of the *Analogy*, Butler had Tindal and his book more directly in view than any other of his opponents. *Christianity as old as the Creation* had been published only six years before the *Analogy* appeared. And as the *Analogy* was an answer from the Christian side to

[1] *Christianity as old as the Creation*, p. 366; quoted by Leslie Stephen.

the whole Deistical controversy, so far as it had then proceeded; and as Tindal's work may be regarded as the fullest presentation of the whole Deistical case, it was only natural that many of Butler's arguments should be a direct reply to Tindal's positions.

What, then, is the general character of the answer which Butler gives? It is this. Tindal has, he says, entirely mistaken the nature and limitations of human reason. Not only are the contents of what claims to be the historical revelation different from what reason would, unaided by revelation, have arrived at: containing truths which reason could not have discovered, and giving rise to duties which reason could not have recognised; but reason is incapable of judging *à priori* what the course of God's actions in His dealings with man would be likely to be. God's thoughts cannot be as our thoughts, nor His ways as our ways. The limitations to human knowledge are so real and so great; we can see such a little way into the whole plan and scheme of things; and where we can apprehend only so small a part of the whole plan, we apprehend that there must necessarily be many things that will appear strange and unintelligible to us in what we can see; and it must then be the height of presumption as well as of folly in us to attempt to lay down arbitrary conclusions as to the methods of God's workings, the character of His dealings with men, or the modes in which He shall, and in which He shall not, reveal Himself and make Himself known.[1] In conclusion, Butler points out that the past history and present condition of the heathen world shows a revelation not to be superfluous.[2]

5. Tindal was the most systematic of the Deists. In him are combined, what are generally kept distinct in other Deistical writers, attacks upon the external

[1] *Analogy*, II. chaps. iii. and iv. [2] *Ibid.* II. chap. i.

evidence for, and on the internal credibility of, Christianity. It was to attacks on the external evidence that his successors mainly devoted themselves. The critical vein in Deism was indeed almost as old as its earliest appearance. Charles Blount, before the end of the seventeenth century, had, in a book entitled *The Oracles of Reason*, attempted to throw ridicule on some of the Old Testament miracles, on the story of the Fall, and perhaps (by a life which he published of Apollonius of Tyana) on the New Testament miracles as well. This work, not very important in itself except as a kind of harbinger of much that was to follow, was answered by Leslie's *Short and Easy Method with the Deists.* In this he attempted (I think with some success) to suggest certain plain and obvious tests by which the historical credibility of considerable portions of the Old Testament, as well as the main facts of the New Testament, might be established. But the real assault upon Christianity on the critical side came from Collins. This author, in a book entitled *A Discourse on Freethinking, occasioned by the Rise and Growth of a Sect called Freethinkers,*[1] tried to demonstrate not only the advantages which resulted from the submission of every question, theological or other, to free inquiry; but also that when any question has been so submitted the decision has always been against supernaturalism. In this contention he was opposed by Bentley, who showed that the decay of the belief in supernaturalism (so far as it could be established as a fact) was due not to the spread of Deism, but to the growth of science; and that, among philosophers and men of science, the majority had been themselves firm believers. To another contention of Collins's, that the number of various readings in the New Testament, which Dr. Mills had recently brought to light, disproved

[1] Published in 1713.

the trustworthiness, or at anyrate the verbal accuracy, of the text, Bentley further answered that, in accordance with well-known principles of criticism, a text sufficiently accurate for all practical purposes could be determined; that, in any case, the variations alleged were not of a kind seriously to affect the sense or trustworthiness of the writings as a whole. Bentley's answer to Collins was generally accepted as final and satisfactory; nor do the latter's writings seem to have carried great weight. They were important only as indicative of a temper which was perpetually spreading —the temper which required Christianity to justify itself at the bar of reason, as to both its internal contents and also its external attestation.

Foiled in this attack, Collins renewed his onslaught on Christianity at a later date in another direction. Whiston, a Cambridge divine of a rather harebrained kind, but a good man and a friend of Edward Talbot, had attempted to show that the prophecies quoted in the New Testament could not be brought into harmony with the text of the Old Testament as we at present possess it; and he proceeded to amend the Old Testament text by the aid of certain ancient versions and paraphrases, so that it could be brought into such accord with the New Testament applications of it as to exhibit a rigid and literal fulfilment. It is on the foundation laid by Whiston that Collins proceeds to build. In his book, entitled *A Discourse of the Grounds and Reasons of the Christian Religion*,[1] he attempts to show, first, that prophecy and its fulfilment are, and have always been, admitted to be the chief among the credentials of Christianity; and secondly, that this credential proves practically valueless unless recourse is had either to some system of excision and insertion such as Whiston had practised, and a certain

[1] Published in 1726.

learned Dutchman named Surenbusius had carried to greater and more extravagant lengths; or to a system of allegorising, by the help of which the prophecies might be made to mean anything at all. In either case the prophecies were, of course, deprived of all evidential value whatsoever.

After the attack on prophecy came one on miracles. Collins had promised "A Discourse upon the Miracles of the Old and New Testament," but did not actually execute it. His work was taken up by Thomas Woolston, a fellow of Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge. Woolston's *Six Discourses on the Miracles of our Saviour* appeared in the years 1727–1729, some seven years before the publication of the *Analogy*. If Whiston was harebrained, Woolston seems to have been downright crazy. He applies to miracles the method which Collins had proposed to apply to prophecy. He first attempts to show, or perhaps it would be more proper to say assumes, that the accounts of the Gospel miracles cannot be accepted as narratives of simple matter of fact, and proposes, therefore, to treat them as mere allegories. His contention is "that the narratives of these miracles are on the face of them preposterous. They are so grotesque that to listen gravely to their recital "exceeds all power of face." Such a contention, enforced as Woolston enforced it, with every kind of ribaldry and profaneness, did not constitute any very serious criticism on the Gospel history. His work served partly to wing some of the epigrams which were, as we learn from Butler, bandied about in the drawing-rooms and the club-houses of the society of the time; partly, as it was directed not at the connection between the two Testaments, and the support which one was supposed to yield to the other, but at the very essence of the Gospel itself, it forced men to consider under what conditions miracles might be

regarded as possible, and therefore credible,—a question to the solution of which Butler contributed one chapter in the second part of the *Analogy*.

It is clear from the above review of the chief phases through which the controversy had passed that the time had come when the whole Christian case required to be restated, and the argument in defence of Christianity presented as one connected and consistent whole. As Butler clearly saw, it was comparatively easy to make out an effective onslaught on this or that particular side or aspect of Christianity taken in isolation from the rest; and an unreal appearance of victory might thus be brought about. But things presented themselves in a very different light when all the parts were viewed in their relation to one another, and the whole argument was set forth in all its completeness. The apparent victory would then be often seen to be converted into an actual defeat. It was this task which Butler essayed in the *Analogy*. His object was to present in its entirety the whole connected case, as it appeared to his mind, for Christianity as a complete scheme. His method was, as he tells one of his correspondents, to consider, as he went along, each possible formidable objection that could be brought against the position he was considering; and to frame, in the light of the whole, the best answer that could be made to it. The objections which he puts into the mouths of his opponents are, as all his most candid critics admit, never unreal; nor are the answers which he makes to them unreal either. They are always weighty and well considered; and at the end he does not claim to have done more than he has actually accomplished. The proof which he has offered is, he admits, "not demonstrative; it is not offered as such, but it amounts to a really conclusive *practical* proof, and one impossible," so he thinks, "to

be evaded or answered." "Hence, therefore, may be observed distinctly what is the force of this treatise. It will be to those who are convinced of religion, on proof arising out of liberty and moral fitness, an additional proof and a confirmation of it; to such as do not admit these principles, an original proof of it, and a confirmation of that proof. Those who believe will here find the scheme of Christianity cleared of objections, and the evidence of it in a peculiar manner strengthened; those who do not believe will at least be shown the absurdity of all attempts to prove Christianity false, the plain undoubted credibility of it, and I hope a good deal more."[1] How far the claims here advanced are justified we must now proceed to consider by a review of the main arguments of the *Analogy* itself.

[1] *Analogy*, II. viii. §§ 26, 27.

CHAPTER V

THE "ANALOGY," PART I

THE *Analogy* was published in 1736. Butler had been made chaplain to Lord Chancellor Talbot some three years previously; but it was only earlier in the year in which the *Analogy* appeared that he had been introduced to Queen Caroline, made Clerk of the Closet by her, and invited to attend those gatherings of distinguished men for philosophical discussion in which the Queen so greatly delighted. This mere statement of the dates seems to dispose of a suggestion, originally put forward by Mr. Pattison and adopted by Mr. Matthew Arnold, that the *Analogy* represents the replies, thought out and co-ordinated by Butler, to the objections which he had heard taken to Christianity in the Queen's philosophical parties. The germs, moreover, of the thoughts worked out in the *Analogy*, and even its central position, are to be found in one at least of the sermons published ten years previously;[1] and this latter book, as he tells us himself, was composed gradually, and represents the results of the labours of many years. The whole work strikes us, indeed, as like some great edifice raised with infinite pains and toil, every stone and brick of which has been carefully fitted into its place, and tested and rung to see if it will bear the strain which has been placed upon it. But while this is so, the

[1] Sermon XV., "On the Ignorance of Man."

suggestion contains this much truth—that the objections which in the course of his work Butler considers and meets are not mere fanciful objections, but those actually current at the time, objections which might be heard any day paraded in the coffee-house or advanced in the drawing-room. Butler in his *Durham Charge* reminds his clergy how easily they might be called upon to defend their position, or to take a part in religious controversy, even in the innocent social gatherings which they attended; and he gives them some excellent advice as to how to conduct themselves should the occasion arise. It was indeed, as Mr. Pattison points out, the distinctive feature of the Deistical controversy that it was essentially popular, — popular, that is, not among the masses (though certain echoes of it reverberating among them tended to that weakening of the religious sanction and that general relaxation of morals of which contemporary writers so frequently complain), — but among the average run of educated people who make the reading public, and whose sentiments and thoughts we find reflected in the literature of the time. Among such as these scepticism, based upon the objections which the Deists had propounded, had spread very far; so far that, as Butler puts it in his Advertisement: "It is come, I know not how, to be taken for granted by many persons that Christianity is not so much as a subject of inquiry; but that it is now at length discovered to be fictitious. And accordingly they treat it, as if in the present age this were an agreed point among all people of discernment; and nothing remained but to set it up as a principal subject of mirth and ridicule, as it were by way of reprisals, for its having so long interrupted the pleasures of the world. On the contrary, thus much at least will be here found not taken for

granted but proved, that any reasonable man who will thoroughly consider the matter may be as much assured as he is of his own being that it is not, however, so clear a case that there is nothing in it."[1]

But while Butler thus made it his principal object to meet those objections which had become, so to speak, current coin, and which seemed to him directly to lead to or encourage that moral indifference or profligacy which were observable everywhere around him, he by no means neglects those more subtle and elaborate arguments which were to be found in the numerous Deistical publications of the day, and frames his answer in such a way as to refute these no less than the more popular contentions. Among both classes of objectors, as among Unitarians at the present time, there were many kinds and degrees of unbelief. Clarke distinguished, as we have already noticed, four distinct classes of professed Deists, varying from those who were all but acknowledged atheists on the one hand, to those who were scarcely distinguishable from liberal Churchmen on the other;[2] and there seems to have been much the same diversity in the different phases of popular opinion as in the writings of the more learned. But amid all this diversity there was one point on which all were pretty well agreed, a point which Butler therefore feels himself justified in assuming or taking for granted, namely, that the universe was created and its laws ordered by a reasonable, all-wise, and all-powerful God. Some, like Locke, Clarke himself, and many others, held that this belief was a demonstrable truth, derivable directly from the most certain and most unquestionable principles of our nature; others, not admitting this, still considered that on grounds of common sense it was a conclusion which it was reasonable to accept. This admission,

[1] Advertisement to *Analogy*. [2] See last Chapter, pp. 134, 135.

common ground to himself and his opponents, is the point from which the *Analogy* starts. Behind this fundamental belief Butler does not care to go; nor, indeed, was it necessary for him to do so. It was obviously superfluous to convince opponents on a point on which they confessed themselves to be convinced already. What the *Analogy* then attempts to do is this: assuming this position as admitted, it asks, What light does the constitution of the universe, the order of things actually revealed in experience, throw on the character of the God who has made and governs it? How far do our faculties enable us to judge of His character and plan? By what actual or natural limitations are our judgments on such points circumscribed? How far, again, do we find objections presenting themselves against the wisdom and goodness of God in the course of nature analogous to those which are urged, first, against the truths set forth by natural religion, and then against those contained in God's alleged revelation to man? How far, here again, is our power of judging limited? Must there not here also, in consequence of the limitation of our powers, be difficulties and things open to exception? In thus attacking the problem from the side of fact, of nature and experience, Butler was adopting what was practically a new method in theology. He had, as has been already pointed out, introduced a similar change in the sphere of moral philosophy. In place of the attempts which had been made by previous writers on the orthodox side to set morality on a demonstrative basis, he had proposed to establish it and to show its obligatoriness from a consideration of the facts of human nature and man's position in the world. Now in the *Analogy*, in place of the demonstrations which Clarke and others had produced that God exists, that He is all-powerful and

all-wise, and so must be good and act in such and such ways,—demonstrations which really convinced but few people (for but few could follow them); and convinced, perhaps, no one who was not on other grounds prepared to admit these conclusions,—Butler proposed to gain views about God from a consideration of what He revealed Himself to be in nature, and in the familiar facts of everyday life; while he would test the probability of the account of His nature and will, which was presented to us in what claimed to be a revelation (or rather, a series of revelations) purporting to come from Him, from their resemblance, or want of resemblance, to what may be gathered about Him from the ways and course of nature. And here, perhaps, it is to be observed that the term "nature" is used by Butler in a somewhat wider sense than that which nowadays we ordinarily attach to it. When we speak of nature we mean principally or exclusively the physical facts and laws of the material world, the laws of man's physical environment as they are now often called; but Butler comprehends under the term nature, in addition to physical laws, those arrangements and ordinances of human society which grow up spontaneously and without any conscious exercise of man's deliberation and will. Thus he speaks of the infliction of punishment by society on certain acts or crimes, and even of the ill-will and displeasure with which men generally regard the commission of such acts, as part of the "natural order"; as being, he holds, as truly part of that order as are the laws according to which chemical elements combine, or bodies, when left to themselves, fall to the ground. The argument as thus presented is, as Butler admits, and indeed insists, nothing but a probable argument, an argument from probability; but in all practical affairs we have so constantly to consider and weigh probabilities that

probability may be described as the very "guide of life." Nor does the fact that the probability may even be a very slight one absolve us in practical matters from the obligation of acting in accordance with it. It is often the very essence of prudence and of good sense in the conduct of our affairs that we act in such a way as the well-considered probabilities of the case, however slight these be, dictate; and if we also act in matters where religion and our future interests are at stake on a similar estimate even of slight probabilities, we are at least following in the steps of that prudence, the exhibition of which is so much praised and so highly prized in the affairs of this life.

With this method of arguing from analogy, of determining what God's course is likely to be from the consideration of the acknowledged facts of nature and the experience of everyday life, Butler contrasts another method much in vogue in his day. This, assuming that God ought to desire such and such ends (*e.g.* the greatest happiness of all His creatures, or their greatest virtue, or some coincidence or combination of the two); and assuming, further, that these ends can only be brought about by such and such means, or that these are the best means by which they can be brought about, proceeds to criticise the existing order of the world and the contents of revelation from the point of view of these assumptions. But inasmuch as we have not the faculties which would enable us to apprehend clearly and certainly either the ends at which God must aim; or the means by which He must or can best attain these ends; and since at best we can possibly know only a very small part of His whole scheme and plan, such speculations are necessarily futile, and are only too apt to be misleading and false. Being themselves unwarrantable assumptions, they furnish no sufficient basis for useful criticism.

The conclusion which by his method Butler proposes to establish is this, that if we take the following eleven propositions to represent, the first five of them the principal truths of natural, the last six the chief truths of revealed religion, we shall find that the objections which are taken to each one of these positions are strictly analogous to, and may be paralleled by, objections which might be alleged against similar points occurring in the course and order of nature. But these objections are admitted by the Deists themselves, and by their followers, not to be conclusive to disprove the Divine origin and Divine ordering of the natural world. It follows, then, that similar objections should not be regarded as furnishing valid disproofs either of the Divine origin of natural religion, or of the truths of revelation either.

With regard to natural religion, Butler's chief points are the following:—(1) That mankind is appointed to live in a future state. (2) That in that state everyone shall be rewarded or punished. (3) That each will be rewarded or punished respectively for all that behaviour here which we comprehend under the words virtuous or vicious, morally good or morally evil. (4) That our present life is a probation, a state of trial and of discipline for that future one. (5) That the objections which are brought against such a doctrine from our actions being supposed to be necessary have, and can have, no practical value; while those which are urged against it, on the grounds that such a scheme is not in accordance with the wisdom and goodness of God, are sufficiently answered by the consideration that the plan is only imperfectly and partially made known to us at present. In the second part of the *Analogy*, which deals with the truths of revealed religion, the truths passed under review are,—that this world being in a state of apostasy and wickedness, and consequently of

ruin, and the sense both of their condition and duty being greatly corrupted amongst men, this gave occasion for an additional dispensation of providence which is (1) of the utmost importance; (2) proved by miracles; (3) but yet contains in it many things appearing to us strange and not to have been expected; (4) this dispensation is further a scheme or system of things carried on by the mediation of a Divine Person, the Messiah, in order to the recovery of the world; (5) yet it has not been revealed to all men, nor proved with the strongest possible evidence to all those to whom it is revealed; (6) but only to such a part of mankind, and with such particular evidence as the wisdom of God thought fit.[1]

It is obvious that in the treatment of the subject here sketched the whole method of defence is negative rather than positive,—that is to say, it is, and is designed to be, an answer to objections taken to these different positions, rather than a positive exposition of their truth; yet inasmuch as when Butler wrote, it was these objections partly urged by professed Deists, partly started in the habitual round of social intercourse, which were so largely undermining men's faith; it is doubtful whether he could have found a more effectual line of defence than that which he has adopted. Two great merits calculated to give it no merely temporary but a permanent value we may in any case claim for the *Analogy*—(1) that the facts to which it makes appeal are admitted and unassailable; and (2) that throughout it Butler rather understates than exaggerates the force of the arguments which he urges.

I propose in the present chapter to pass under review the main positions which he advances respecting natural religion, and the chief arguments by which he supports them, leaving for the next chapter the

[1] *Analogy*, Introd. § 16.

second part of the *Analogy*, to which, however, this first part must be considered as properly introductory.

I.

There are, as Mr. Gladstone candidly admits,[1] probably few persons who do not rise from the perusal of Butler's first chapter on a future life without a certain sense of disappointment. He seems, as compared with many other writers, to make out so poor a case for the conclusion he seeks to establish. Is this, we ask ourselves, the utmost a great thinker can say on so momentous a theme? Surely the case must be stronger than the one here presented to us? Undoubtedly it is; and Butler would not for a moment deny that it is so. But we must remember, in the first place, that Butler does not himself attach quite the value which other writers do to the absolute strength of his positions. If, he urges, a clear case is made out in favour of a certain position, so that the probabilities on the side of its being true clearly outweigh those in favour of the opposite conclusion, we are, as prudent and practical men, as much bound to give full weight in our conduct to this overplus of probability as we are to demonstration itself. But such an overplus of probability in favour of a future life Butler certainly believes himself to have established.[2]

In the second place, we must bear in mind that Butler in this chapter is, so to speak, fighting with his hands tied. His object is to exhibit what can be gathered as to the truths of natural religion, and first as to our survival in a future state, from the analogy of the course of nature. But the main arguments for man's future existence are derived not from points in which he resembles the other orders of created beings, but from those in which he transcends and so differs

[1] *Analogy*, I. i. § 1, note 1.

[2] *Ibid.* i. § 32, viii. § 4.

from them, *i.e.* from points in which he is in a sense "supernatural." It follows, therefore, that the natural analogies must form the weakest part of the whole argument for immortality; and practically, as Mr. Gladstone observes,[1] a great deal of the remaining chapters of the first part of the *Analogy* must be regarded as supplemental to the provisional proof furnished in the first chapter, and so giving it additional strength.

Then again, thirdly, it is true of this first chapter, as of the rest of the *Analogy*, that Butler spends his main strength on the negative rather than on the positive side of the question, on meeting objections taken to the doctrine rather than on building up constructively a positive proof. And certainly on this side of the argument there is no sign of weakness or hesitation. The objections which can be urged against our survival after death are effectively and thoroughly met; and we feel that Butler has at any rate succeeded in demolishing his opponents' positions even when we may have doubts whether he has succeeded in establishing his own.

He begins, however, by stating the positive side of the case. Man during the course of his existence goes through many and great changes from the embryo in the womb, till he reaches full-grown maturity and even old age, and he does this without ever losing his identity throughout them all. Is there any reason to think that death, which is but one change more, will effect that destruction of identity which previous changes have left intact? Further, other creatures—insects, birds, and the like—undergo in the course of their existence even greater changes than man does, and yet remain in spite of them the same living creatures. Analogy thus suggests that man, in passing through even so great a change as death, need not in the process by any means necessarily lose his identity.

[1] *Studies*, part i. chap. i.

The same truth is even more strongly enforced by what we may call the principle of continuity. This principle we have to assume in all our reasoning about nature, whether animate or inanimate. The principle is—that any individual object which is in existence will continue to exist, such as it is, unless there arises some force which brings about its dissolution or destruction. It follows, then, that we may assume that man's soul and vital powers, when once they have come into existence, will continue to exist, and to exist as the same powers, unless death be such a force as is capable of bringing about their dissolution or destruction. But is it such a force?

The question thus raised transfers, as it were, the argument from the positive to the negative side; Butler's main business through the remainder of the chapter being to show that death is not, and cannot be proved to be, such a force. This he proves in various ways. In the first place, he argues there is nothing *in the reason of things* which would lead us to think that death is the destruction of our vital powers; we know far too little either what death is in itself or what the conditions are on which our vital powers depend, to be able to pronounce one way or the other, whether death will be or will not be the destruction of them. If we turn next from *à priori* arguments to experience, we find much to suggest that death cannot be, or is not likely to be, the destruction of our powers. In the first place, consciousness being one and indiscerptible, the soul, which is conscious, would seem to be indiscerptible also. But if indiscerptible, then it would seem to be unaffected by the dissolution of the body, and so will necessarily survive its dissolution. And again, if consciousness be not absolutely indiscerptible, it may still reside in particles smaller than those into which the body is dissolved at death, and so escape sharing in

the body's dissolution.[1] I cannot think that much weight can be attached to either of these arguments. Butler himself must have accepted them, or he would hardly have put them down; he was too honest a man to advance arguments in which he did not himself believe; and they have always appealed to a certain class of minds from Plato onwards. But, as Mr. Gladstone points out,[2] he does not allude to them in his general summing up; and had he attached great weight to them he could hardly have thus omitted them. He probably put them in the forefront because they were arguments to which great value was attached at the time, and there were people who were likely to be influenced by them. In themselves they seem scarcely tenable; the second suggestion sounds almost ludicrous, and with respect to the first, one hardly sees how the unity of consciousness can prove its indiscerptibility. In any case the arguments are of that *à priori*, abstract kind against which the whole of the *Analogy* is a protest.

Butler has, however, better and stronger arguments behind, to render probable the survival of the soul through death. Experience shows us that our vital powers are to some extent independent of bodily conditions. Large changes take place in these conditions without affecting the powers themselves. Our whole material frame, for instance, is said to be replaced once in seven years, and yet the change in no way affects our vital powers. And again, we may lose whole limbs, and even large parts of our bodies, and our vital powers be not destroyed by the loss. Our powers of sensation are even more independent of bodily and material conditions than are our vital powers; our senses seem like instruments through which sensations are conveyed to us, rather than themselves percipient; it is we who perceive through them, not they themselves which

[1] *Analogy*, I. i. §§ 10, 15. [2] *Studies*, part ii. chap. i.

perceive. It is therefore at least possible that the percipient "we" may survive in death, even though the instruments through which we now perceive perish; and that we may acquire for ourselves fresh instruments of perception. Thirdly, our powers of reflection are obviously even more independent of material conditions than are our vital powers or our powers of sensation. Not only are they often not impaired up to the very moment of death, but they are sometimes even heightened and intensified; so that we cannot readily believe that the moment of our dissolution will destroy them. This argument has very great force. There can be no doubt that our powers of reflection, at any rate, and still more our moral character, are not explicable through our bodily organism. The question is, Can they exist in independence of it? For this no direct evidence from experience is possible. No mortal man has penetrated behind the veil or has left us a record of what he found there; and till one has, we are forced (apart from revelation) to rely on partial hints and analogies, and trust here, as elsewhere, "the larger hope."

But this "larger hope" is, as Butler further points out, much confirmed not only by the generally prevalent (we cannot say absolutely universal) expectation among mankind of a life beyond the grave; but still more by the sense of incompleteness of which our life here is full; and also by the many indications there are that we are being trained and fitted here for a further existence, in which our powers shall have fuller scope and our characters have more room to expand. That death will usher us into such a wider life the analogy of our birth seems to suggest—"a state in which our capacities and sphere of perception and action may be much greater than at present."[2] There being nothing to prove that death will suspend, still less that it will

[1] *Analogy*, I. i. §§ 17, 24. [2] *Ibid.* I. i. § 27.

destroy, our powers either of action or reflection, it may well be that "when we go out of this world we shall pass into new scenes, and a new state of life and action, just as naturally as we came into the present."[1] "This new state may, further, be a social one. And the advantages of it, advantages of every kind, may *naturally* be bestowed, according to some fixed general laws of wisdom, upon every one in proportion to the degree of his virtue." And even if "the advantages of that future natural state should be bestowed not by the will of society, as those of our present state, in some measure, are, but entirely by His more immediate action upon Whom the whole frame of nature depends; yet this distribution may be just as *natural*, as their being distributed here by the instrumentality of men."[1]

How much there is in this present life which suggests such a future distribution of advantages and disadvantages, of rewards and punishments; how the world being governed now on such a system, renders it probable that our existence hereafter will be so governed also; how much there is in this life to suggest that our existence here is a state of preparation and discipline for a larger existence hereafter; and how likely it must be that we cannot fully apprehend the designs and purposes of God as a whole, it is the object of the succeeding chapters to disclose.

II.

The two next chapters,[2] which deal with different aspects of one and the same subject, will be most conveniently considered together. In the first of them Butler tries to show that God exercises a direct government over men in this world; in the second, that this government is essentially a moral government. God's

[1] *Analogy*, I. i. §§ 27, 31. [2] *Ibid.* chaps. ii. and iii.

government is proved by His attaching pleasure and delight to certain actions and courses of conduct, pain to other actions and other courses of conduct; and by His endowing men with a power to foresee that either consequence will follow according as they act one way or the other. This notion of rewarding and punishing certain determinate actions and courses of conduct forms the proper idea of government; so that, to those who believe in a personal God at all, it must seem as certain that God governs men and women as that the magistrate governs the subjects of the State, or a father his children, or a master his servants."[1] Nor does it make any difference either (1) that the punishment and reward do not *always* take effect, since in the great majority of cases they do so; or (2) that the punishments may in some cases seem slight and even trivial, and the rewards also slight and trivial; or (3) that such rewards and punishments seem to follow by way of *natural* consequence instead of being, so to speak, arbitrarily attached to the acts in question; or (4) that they do not follow immediately, but sometimes only after a long delay, on the performance of the acts; or (5) whether we do or, as oftener happens, do not contemplate the consequences as likely to follow at the time when the acts are committed. For, however little we contemplate them, the consequences will follow alike for good and for bad, and must be regarded, in so far as they are capable of being foreseen, as the punishments or rewards attached to the actions,—"rewards and puinshments which we are regarded, and justly regarded, as bringing on ourselves."[2] Two other points remain to be observed. First, that opportunities, if neglected, will often never recur. The chance offered by them to us, if let slip, is often never repeated. A wasted and misspent youth, for instance, can constantly never be repaired. And secondly, it often

[1] *Analogy*, I. ii. §§ 6, 9.

[2] *Ibid.* I. ii. § 12.

happens that, while repentance and amendment are efficacious up to a certain point, yet if that point be past, the consequences of our actions become irretrievable; we cannot then undo the ills, whether to ourselves or others, which they entail. The consequences work themselves out regardless, as it were, of our sorrow; and repentance becomes almost like worthless regret. Now it is obvious, says Butler, that all this "natural" order of things, which we constantly see going on in the world around us, presents strong analogies to what may happen to us, under the government of the same God, in a future life; and should in reason make men at least apprehensive lest a doom, similar to that which they have so often the opportunity of tracing here, may also await them hereafter. In the end, the whole matter is thus summed up. "Reflections of this kind are not without their terrors to serious persons, the most free from enthusiasm and of the greatest strength of mind; but it is fit things be stated and considered as they really are. And there is in the present age a certain fearlessness with regard to what may be hereafter under the government of God, which nothing but an universally acknowledged demonstration on the side of atheism can justify, and which makes it quite necessary that men be reminded, and, if possible, made to feel, that there is no sort of ground for being thus presumptuous, even upon the most sceptical principles."[1]

Mr. Stephen is right in regarding chapter iii. as containing the very kernel of the doctrine of the *Analogy*.[2] Having shown in chapter ii. that God is the governor of men, governing them in the same sense in which a magistrate governs his fellow-citizens, or a father his children, Butler proceeds in this chapter to ask, Does experience reveal to us in any way the prin-

[1] *Analogy*, I. ii. § 20. [2] *Hist. of Eng. Thought*, vol. i. v. p. 292.

ciples by which His government is directed? Can we make out from the facts of life anything about the mind, temper, and character of God? Butler holds that we can; that, though the principles on which God's government proceeds are not fully revealed, and though the matter may take some care and attention fully to apprehend it, yet the *beginnings* of a righteous administration may beyond all question be found in nature; and we are able thus to convince ourselves that God's government is a moral government,—one, that is, in which men are rewarded and suffer, on the whole and in the long-run, according to their deserts. For though there may be doubt in individual instances whether virtue be actually pleasanter in itself and in its results than vice, particularly where the case is one of a reformed character, yet in the generality of instances it certainly is so. This is still clearer if we reckon in the sense of content and tranquillity of mind which virtue brings with it, the good repute which right action earns from most men, and above all from the good; the escape alike from actual punishment at the hands of the law, and also from the dread of it, which virtuous courses secure, and again, the avoidance of fears for the future and the prevalence of good hopes for it, which (explain them how we may) do certainly exist in the minds of the great majority of men, attaching the one to the performance of virtue, the other to the consciousness of vice. Goodwill and favour from their fellow-men generally attend those who do well, while ill-will and dislike largely pursue those who do evil.[1] And these good consequences, it is further to be observed, belong to virtue, *as such*, and the ill consequences to vice, *as such*; whereas, when misery attends virtue and happiness vice, they attend them owing to some external and, so to speak, accidental cause.

[1] *Analogy*, I. iii. §§ 13, 14, 15.

A good man may be the citizen of a country governed by bad laws, and so be punished for breaking the law; but he is clearly punished in such a case, not because he is a good man, but because he disregards the law. The fact that the world is governed by general laws is further apt to produce in individual instances what appear like cases of hardship which tend still further to obscure the connection which exists between virtue and happiness, misery and vice; yet this connection does none the less exist, and at once falls in with our natural expectation that it should be so; and the fact is a further proof, independent of that expectation, that it is the regular course of God's dealings with men to reward virtue and punish vice, and so helps to make it plain that He is indeed a moral governor of the world.[1]

And observe, again, that this tendency for virtue to be rewarded and vice punished goes further than its actual fulfilment under existing conditions. For there are many hindrances which at present interfere with virtue exerting its full strength and securing its proper triumph. Among these we must reckon the ignorance good men are often in of one another's characters; the misconceptions which in such circumstances are sure to arise, and the consequent want of co-operation and want of union between them; the shortness of human life cutting short many a career before it has had time to exert its proper influence; and other untoward accidents which contribute to goodness being often overborne. Now in a future state it is easy to suppose these hindrances removed; since even in this present world we can imagine a state of things which would be more favourable to virtue than the present. What would be the result? Obviously, that in that future state, as in that more ideal state on earth, virtue would

[1] *Analogy*, I. iii. § 20.

be more immediately and directly rewarded and vice punished than they are now—an improved state of things which would of itself tend still further to enforce virtue and to deter from vice: for if a commonwealth of perfectly virtuous men were established on earth, and continued for a sufficient time, it would gradually, partly by its inherent strength and unity, partly by the force of its example, acquire a power and influence which would give it a world-wide dominion.

The conclusions, then, to which these facts of experience point are these. First, God is shown to be here and now a moral governor, distributing rewards and punishments to virtue and vice respectively, *i.e.* in accordance with merit and demerit. Secondly, there is reason to think that this may be done more perfectly and in a higher degree in a future life than it is at present. For, thirdly, we can recognise that there is an inherent tendency in virtue to be rewarded and in vice to be punished, while the hindrances to their being so are in many cases artificial and of a kind that we can imagine easily to disappear in another state of existence; so that things shall no longer go on in the same "mixed way"—virtue sometimes prosperous, sometimes depressed; vice sometimes punished, sometimes successful—as they do at present upon earth.[1] Such "tendencies are to be considered as intimations, as implicit promises and threatenings, from the Author of Nature, of much greater rewards to follow virtue and vice than do at present." "From these things together arises a real presumption that the moral scheme of government established in nature shall be carried on much further towards perfection hereafter; and, I think, a presumption it shall be absolutely completed."[2]

The facts, as Butler states them, had been often noticed and were generally admitted. Shaftesbury and

[1] *Analogy*, I. iii. § 32. [2] § 38.

other writers had already insisted, in almost exaggerated terms, on the connection between virtue and happiness, vice and misery.[1] What was new was Butler's argument that this connection showed the moral government of the world; and the inference he drew therefrom, that God's incipient or imperfect moral government here gave the promise of a more complete and perfect moral government hereafter. In modern times an attempt has been made, while admitting his facts, to meet Butler's argument in the following way. May not the argument, asks Mr. Stephen, be inverted?[2] Is it not reasonable to assume, if conscience approves courage and temperance, justice, veracity and public spirit, and these virtues on the whole produce happiness for the individual (and still more for the society of which he is a member), that the reason why conscience so approves them and disapproves their opposites is that they have this very effect? Conscience will thus be partly the offspring of a perception, often inherited and mostly unconscious, of the tendency of certain actions and courses of conduct to produce happiness in the individual, partly of a consciousness that they tend to promote the well-being of society. The question between Butler and his critic, as Mr. Stephen himself points out, thus resolves itself into this—Can we claim an independent origin for our moral convictions?[3] Can it be shown that acts and motives have, for the reason and the conscience, an intrinsic rightness or wrongness apart from any consequences to which they lead in the way of producing happiness whether for the agent himself or for others? If this can be established, Butler's argument becomes plausible and coherent. If the opposite can be proved

[1] Lord Shaftesbury's *Inquiry concerning Virtue*, part ii., quoted in *Analogy*, I. iii. § 5.

[2] *Eng. Thought*, i. v. § 13, p. 292.

[3] *Loc. cit.* § 14.

it loses not, I think, all, but a great part of its force. The question is too long and too difficult to be entered on here. I shall only make two remarks upon it. First, that the attempts which have been made to show conscience to be derivative, and to resolve morality into a mere calculus of hedonistic consequences, have not on the whole approved themselves to the most considerable thinkers since Butler's time. While Kant is unanswered, "independent" systems of morality hold the field. Secondly, writers like Mr. Stephen, who are perpetually harping upon the inequalities which exist in the distribution of happiness and misery, who assert that it is constantly not the virtuous who are rewarded nor the vicious who suffer, seem to cut the ground from under their own feet; since, while maintaining that conscience is nothing else than an acquired or inherited perception of the consequences of conduct, they yet hold that the consequences are in so many cases not in accordance with the moral judgments which are said to follow from them.

III.

Chapters iv. and v., like chapters ii. and iii., may best be taken together, as they treat of what is virtually but one subject. The subject treated in both is—That it is reasonable to regard our life here as a state of probation, discipline, and preparation for a future life hereafter. In the last two chapters Butler has shown that we are under what may be described as a state of government, and that the government exercised over us is a moral government. But to what end is this government being directed? It is being directed, answers religion, to fitting us for another state of existence hereafter. But the idea of life being thus a probation involves the further notions of our future condition being determined

by our present behaviour; and of our being exposed to temptation, trial, and difficulty. Some people objected to this as being incompatible with the supposed goodness of God. To them Butler makes answer, that we are exposed to risks in respect of our temporal happiness in just the same way, and owing to the same kind of temptations, as we are with respect to our future happiness. These risks, or temptations as we call them, are of two kinds—they arise either from the force of circumstances acting upon us, or from our own unruly passions; or, as is most commonly the case, from a combination of the two. But one or other of these forces, leading us astray, sometimes with our eyes shut, sometimes with our eyes open, makes us ruin or neglect our worldly interests, exactly in the same way as they make us disregard the claims of virtue. They thus cause us to sacrifice on earth that happiness which is the effect of virtue. But if no one regards it as unfair or inequitable that we should be thus charged, as it were, with the custody of our own worldly fortunes, how can it be inequitable or unfair if our future condition is equally made dependent on ourselves and on our conduct? No greater burden would seem in this respect to be laid upon us than we are well able to bear. Our condition is neither unsuited to our powers, nor our powers to our condition; and that we should be in this way, as far as our moral character is concerned, exposed to the proof and trial of temptation, is strictly analogous to what we daily experience in ourselves, and watch in others, in the matter of our temporal interests.

Nor is it unreasonable or contrary to analogy to regard this present life as a period of discipline and preparation fitting us for a future state of existence. Each period of our life here is in some sort a preparation for all that follows it—childhood for youth, youth for manhood, manhood for old age. According to the use

which we make of each, such to a large extent is our fortune in the period that follows. A spoilt childhood mars our youth and shipwrecks our mature life; a wasted or misspent youth paves too often the way for a miserable old age. Thus human life on earth must be regarded as a perpetual progress; each stage in which is a preparation for those that come after. We do not come into the world with all our capacities, whether intellectual or moral, ready made, fully formed, or perfectly adapted to the circumstances in which we are called upon to act. It is only by the formation of habits, built up in us through experience and repeated action and exercise, that we are fitted to play our part in this world. Apart from experience and the formation of such habits, a child is powerless to cope with the difficulties of life. But if in this way by a laborious process of development, the experience, the capacities, and power, fitting us for our earthly life, are gradually acquired, there can be nothing unnatural or surprising in our needing the experience and training of this life to make us fit for some larger and perhaps higher state of existence hereafter. Nor would the conclusion be weakened even though we could not see *how* this life could be a preparation for a future one. But, as a matter of fact, this is not the case. Accepting the position that God is a moral governor, we can readily understand how this life may be necessary to train us in those habits of piety and virtue which are requisite to make us fit citizens of a kingdom of heaven; and to guard us against those tendencies to lapse from true virtue which arise from our possessing propensities and passions, harmless in themselves, but capable, if indulged to excess or indulged wrongly, of leading us astray from righteousness, and upsetting the balance and due proportion of our nature. For such a training in virtue as would harden our principles and extend

our faculties, life on this earth, with its accompanying difficulties and temptations (temptations resulting in part from the influence of bad example and of the companions among whom we live), seems specially suited. To suppose our life here designed by God for such an end, while it will not explain all the mysteries of human existence, yet goes some way to make our life intelligible and to solve some of its most formidable puzzles.[1]

To this way, however, of regarding life two serious objections may be advanced, and these Butler next proceeds to meet. The first is, that for many life is not a school in virtue but a school in vice; that many are not being rendered by it fit for a higher or better state of existence, but quite the opposite. To this he makes answer:[2] the fact that some, and even many, do not make use of their opportunities does not prove that they were not intended to do so; nor does their neglect detract from the good effects of training and discipline on those who do make use of them; and the loss of souls which thus occurs is analogous to, though more dreadful than, the apparent waste of life which goes on so perpetually in nature. Why there should be this apparent waste we do not know; nor can we tell altogether why there should be this apparent loss of souls who still have the opportunity to do better. This must ever remain the mystery of mysteries. All we can dimly see is that, if God wills that man's will should be left free, the result must in some sense inevitably follow. The other difficulty is this: do we not, in laying such stress on virtue as the necessary condition fitting us for a state of happiness hereafter, make the pursuit of virtue merge into mere selfishness and self-interest, and so deprive that pursuit of all, or of most, of the merit which it would otherwise possess? To this Butler replies that men are hardly ever influenced by one

[1] *Analogy*, I. iv. §§ 24–32. [2] *Ibid.* 34, 35.

single motive, and that the three motives of love of God, disinterested regard for virtue, and reasonable care for our own interests so blend and mingle with one another that it is hard to disentangle or separate them; that habits formed under any one of the three motives become in effect equivalent to those formed under the others, since love of our future interest is in itself a form of virtue, and would be impossible did we not believe in a moral God who associated happiness with virtue. The important point is that habits of virtue should be formed, whatever the motive that originally inspired them; and when formed they go on to a great extent independently of the motive which in the first instance prompted them.

The final objection which Butler meets is a curious and subtle one. It is the passive virtues of endurance, long-suffering, and patience that our life on earth seems best fitted to promote and develop. But what place, it is asked, have the passive virtues generally, and resignation in particular, in a state of things where there will be *ex hypothesi* no more suffering, and consequently no occasion for their direct display? To this it is answered, we know too little of the coming state of things to say positively that we shall have no need of such virtues. Even in a state of happiness it is easy to imagine they may still have their uses, and in any case those virtues may have a positive value in themselves, even though the occasions for their exercise hereafter may be few or non-existent.[1]

The conception which in these chapters Butler has elaborated of our present life being a period of probation, and also of preparation, for a future existence, has probably affected English thought more than any other part of the *Analogy*. As Mr. Stephen is forced to allow, the facts at least admit of the interpretation which

[1] *Analogy*, I. iv. §§ 37, 38.

Butler places upon them, and there is much in the analogies adduced to give probability to the view here maintained. All that he can urge against the doctrine is that there is no direct evidence to support it (which is hardly true for those who accept the reality of our Lord's Resurrection), and that the more obvious interpretation of the facts is to regard the earlier stages of life as simply the preparation for the later stages rather than to consider life as a whole as a preparation for a future existence which lies beyond it. It would, he urges, be a more conclusive proof of Butler's position if it could be shown that the discipline of life were forming in us habits which, while not useful for a life here, had an intelligible purpose in a life hereafter. Of course, our ignorance of the character of the after life renders it impossible for us to produce any such proof; but if it can be shown, as I think it may be shown (and as Butler certainly assumes to be the case), that moral qualities appeal to us as having an independent value, quite apart from their usefulness during this life to the individual or to society at large, then the hypothesis that our life is intended for the formation and perfecting of such qualities in us, and for fitting us for the happiness which their possession brings with it, gets a plausibility and even a probability which Mr. Stephen, with his doctrine of a merely derivative and, we may say, subordinate morality, cannot possibly allow it. To Mr. Stephen the development of morality is a phase incidental to the general development of man; at once a result of past conditions in the history of the race, and a factor helping to determine the future. We may call this phase of development the highest, and this result the most important; yet it is hard to say with what right, if we look only to the fact that morality serves to perpetuate the life of the human race, or of particular races, on this earth, and do not consider the

value of the life it helps to perpetuate. Of course, if life is admitted to be a good,—though on this point Mr. Stephen himself seems somewhat doubtful,—all that promotes life must be good also; and so the virtues which help to promote and enhance life find in this fact their sole and sufficient justification. But to those to whom virtue seems touched by finer issues, and to serve a deeper purpose than merely to enhance or prolong man's present existence, the doctrine that we live in order to become virtuous must seem a more probable doctrine than that the desire to be virtuous is merely a subtle form of the desire to prolong our own existence and that of the society to which we belong. In other words, the religious interpretation of human life, as Butler presents it, must seem more plausible and probable than that our life on earth has a value only for its own sake; and that virtue and goodness are desirable only in so far as and because they tend to secure or prolong that life and the happiness which it brings, and to enable it to be carried on under more favourable conditions. Here comes the parting of the ways between the rival theories.

It is perhaps matter for surprise that while Butler's theory of life as a probation and preparation for another state of existence has so profoundly affected subsequent thought in England, it should not have more distinctly modified the prevailing views of heaven and hell. It is really entirely incompatible with them. Wesley and Whitfield popularised by their teaching an exceedingly material view both of heaven and of hell, and combined it with a crude theory of predestination. These views, stamped deep at the time on the popular imagination, have continued greatly to influence popular religious thought both for good and for bad ever since. If they have awakened in many minds, as they certainly have, a keener sense of personal responsibility, of the ill

effects of sin, of the importance of religion as a practical question, they are also not a little responsible for the repulsion felt towards religion by not a few of the more educated classes and the more thoughtful among the working classes. It is scarcely too much to say that three-fourths of the objections urged against religion in our day are objections not to Christianity in itself, but to the popular misconceptions of it in which a material, and even arbitrary, heaven and hell play so large a part. To all such objections the best antidote is to be found in these chapters of the *Analogy*. In them, as in the second sermon on the Love of God[1] (where his views on the subject are stated more at length), Butler makes it plain that however little we may be able to conceive the conditions under which our new existence will be passed, one thing at least is certain, that our joys and our pains will be alike spiritual, and that there will and can be nothing arbitrary about them. Our joys will be those which our spiritual condition makes us capable of attaining—the sight of God as He is in Himself; the contemplation of His attributes, qualities, and modes of working, of His love, His faithfulness, and truth; the delight we shall feel at being admitted to His presence, and being allowed to engage in His service. Of hell and its pains the bishop speaks sparingly and with reserve; it is not a subject on which his thought delights to dwell; but here too, as in the case of heaven, the pains, he insists, must be spiritual pains, pains, too, which are naturally, not arbitrarily, attached to the evil courses and dispositions on which they follow. Yet the law which so constantly annexes misery and suffering to vice and wickedness even here on earth forbids him to hold optimistic views on the subject, or to think that the same conduct may not be associated with similar pains in the future; and thus he was led seriously to

[1] Sermon XIV.

rebuke the levity of his age, which would not even take count of the possibility of such an alternative, but proceeded to act too often as if the non-existence of future penalties were a demonstrated truth. This, he urges, it certainly cannot be. While into the many questions connected with a future life, its duration, its characteristics, its universality (questions treated some of them with much subtlety, though for the most part with negative results, by Mr. Gladstone in his interesting dissertation on the subject),[1] Butler deliberately refuses to enter, on two points he is clear; first, that the probabilities in favour of a continued existence after death are very strong indeed, as strong as is, perhaps, compatible with leaving any merit to virtue; and secondly, assuming the fact of a future or continued existence, that our condition in it must be largely relative to and determined by our conduct here. As here, so there, our acts and habits will still

> . . . "follow with us from afar,
> And what we have been make us what we are."

IV.

In the two concluding chapters of the first part of the *Analogy* Butler deals first with the objection which ensues from the supposition of all action being necessary; and then with the consequences which arise from the admitted limitations of human knowledge—from the government of God being, as he puts it, a constitution or scheme imperfectly comprehended. With the first of these topics I do not propose to deal at any length; it lies generally outside the main scope or argument of the *Analogy*, and its insertion was probably dictated by the interest the controversy was exciting at the time, and the evil practical consequences which followed from the adoption of the theory of necessity.

[1] *Studies subsidiary to Butler's Works*, part ii. chaps. i.–vi.

Butler's reasoning on the subject amounts to this, that whatever may be the theoretical difficulties in the way of the assumption of the freedom of the will, in practical matters we are bound to act as if the will were free; to go upon the other hypothesis would land us in endless difficulties and empty many of our most familiar terms of all their proper meaning. But if in all practical matters we have to make this assumption, we can scarcely be wrong in going upon a similar assumption in matters of religion, which after all are practical also.

On the last chapter it will be necessary to enter more at length, since it contains Butler's most effective argument against the main Deist position, and furnishes the foundation on which is reared the central portion of the second part of the *Analogy*. The main argument of this chapter had already been shadowed forth in the sermon on the Ignorance of Man, just as some of the most important doctrines of chapter v. had previously appeared in the two sermons on the Love of God. The argument may perhaps be stated as follows. If we look at the natural world, many of the arrangements seem to us at first sight incompatible with that world's being the work of a God who is at once perfectly wise and perfectly good; but these objections, such as they are, to a large extent disappear if we bear in mind the facts: first, that this world is a part of and related to an infinitely wider whole or scheme, of which we know at most a very little corner, of which we can consequently form no adequate conception; but things and arrangements which, from our very narrow point of view, and in relation to our small concerns, may appear objectionable, we can easily understand may, in relation to that larger whole, be desirable or even necessary,—necessary, *i.e.*, as means to ends which, could we view the whole, we might see to be desirable. In the second place, it is easily intelligible that it may be desirable

for the whole that it should be governed by fixed and invariable laws; but if we assume such laws to be desirable, then it is certain that in individual cases hardships will result from their operation; while arbitrary interference with them to prevent such cases of hardship might easily, we can also see, result in greater evils than those which it was invoked to cure. Now, what is true of God's natural government, may very well hold true equally, or even in a greater degree, of His moral government. There is much too that points to the fact that God's moral government, like His natural, is a scheme or plan extending to the universe as a whole,—a scheme or plan of which we can know or understand but a small and even trifling part. When, therefore, there occurs in God's moral government of the world anything which strikes us as arbitrary, or contrary to what seem to us the principles of goodness and justice, the reasonable inference to draw is that this apparent contradiction results from our ignorance of God's scheme or plan as a whole, an ignorance which makes it quite probable that what seems to us unjust or arbitrary may be perfectly explicable by, and even have a necessary place in, God's whole plan or scheme. In this way it comes to pass that our ignorance, and the narrow confines of our knowledge, may be pleaded as a true and adequate answer to many objections which may be urged against God's mode of moral government; and this holds equally though, within the limits to which our knowledge extends, we may be able to trace unmistakable evidences of God's moral government, of His justice and goodness. The general result to which these considerations lead is thus summed up by Butler:[1] "The observations above made lead us to consider this little scene of human life, in which we are so busily engaged, as having a reference, of some sort or

[1] *Analogy*, I. viii. § 1.

other, to a much larger plan of things. Whether we are any way related to the more distant parts of the boundless universe into which we are brought is altogether uncertain. But it is evident that the course of things which comes within our view is connected with somewhat past, present, and future beyond it. So that we are placed, as one may speak, in the middle of a scheme, not a fixed but a progressive one, every way incomprehensible; incomprehensible in a manner equally with respect to what has been, what now is, and what shall be hereafter. And this scheme cannot but contain in it somewhat as wonderful and as much beyond our thought and conception as anything in that of religion."

Scarcely any chapter in the *Analogy* is more illustrative of the general tone and temper of Butler's mind than is this seventh. As we have noticed, the main outline of it had been already sketched in his sermon on the Ignorance of Man, so that the contents of it had been long in his thoughts. The Deists with whom he was arguing were pre-eminently arrogant intellectually; they were positive about their own conclusions, which they identified with the unassailable results of the ripest human reason; for this reason, again, they made excessive claims, they recognised no limits to its powers, but regarded it as competent to pronounce magisterially and finally upon the fitness or unfitness of all things in the universe, to tell us, as it were *ex cathedra*, what becomes and what does not become God Himself. To such a temper that of Butler stands diametrically opposed. His intellect was pre-eminently humble and cautious; if within given limits reason is to be recognised as the final judge and arbiter, those limits, he held, are easily outstepped; and beyond those limits the *à priori* prepossessions of reason itself are an unsafe and fallacious guide; at every point the supposed dictates of reason need to be controlled and tested by fact; and in regions

where we have no facts to go upon, no actual experience to appeal to, our safest course is to admit our ignorance, and to abstain from speculation. For he is profoundly convinced that there are "more things" (probably many more things), "in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in" our "philosophy." Within the limits of earth, and for all practical affairs, reason is a sufficient and satisfactory guide; beyond those limits its light fails us, and we are like mariners going to sea without a compass. We dare not, then, as reasonable men, lay down laws for God, what He may do and what He may not do; this is mere folly and presumption; our wisdom will be to ascertain, by the light of experience, what He has actually ordered and enjoined, and analogy will help us to use the light thus gained to lighten up the dimness of the future and the obscurity of the remote. More than this, in Butler's view, the human intellect cannot wisely attempt. Nor can there be any doubt that, here at anyrate, Butler both exhibits the more admirable temper, and also gets the best of the argument. In his reverence for facts, in his unwillingness to go beyond their evidence and suggestions, Butler exhibits the true scientific spirit; it was the Deists, and not he, who, in spite of their scientific pretensions, should properly be regarded as traitors to reason, and the victims of their own metaphysical figments.

CHAPTER VI

THE "ANALOGY," PART II

THE second part of the *Analogy* deals far more directly with current deistical objections than the first part had done. So far as natural religion went, the Deists, or at anyrate the more orthodox among them, were inclined to emphasise and exaggerate its claims rather than destroy them. Many of them followed Clarke in regarding the dictates of natural religion as being of the nature of necessary truths, truths which it was impossible or self-contradictory to deny. Even the doctrine of the soul's immortality itself was by not a few of them supposed to be of this character. Butler's task hitherto has been to moderate the excessive claims which had been set up on behalf of the truths of natural religion; to show that a more safe if humbler ground for accepting their validity was to be found in the analogies that were presented to them by the admitted facts and laws of the natural world than in the somewhat doubtful and fictitious necessity which had been too hastily claimed for them. And granted there were objections, as there certainly were, to some of the so-called truths of natural religion, and difficulties in the way of accepting them, the best answer to be given to such objections and difficulties consisted (he urged) in pointing out the similar difficulties and objections which confront us in the arrangements of nature, directly we attempt to regard these as the work

and ordinances of a beneficent and omnipotent Creator. Probably the best solution of all such difficulties and objections is to be found in both cases, as pointed out in the last chapter, in the consideration that we know, and by the limitations of our powers are only capable of knowing, a very small fraction or corner of the whole scheme or plan of God, as worked out in the universe as a whole, whether natural or moral; and that that which strikes us, when we regard only a part, as arbitrary or objectionable would, if we could look at it from the point of view of the whole plan, be seen by us to be for the best, and even necessary. But in the second part of his work Butler parts company entirely with those who may have been inclined to follow him so far. The object of his antagonists in crying up natural religion had been to cry down revealed; there was, they said, no need for it; if it served any purpose at all, it served only to confirm the conclusions reached independently by reason; when it was at variance with those conclusions, it was necessarily false; when it attempted to soar beyond them, it became unmeaning. As against such views the argument of the second part of the *Analogy* is directed. It had been shown in the first part that the so-called truths of natural religion are open to many of the same, or similar, exceptions and objections as are urged against the truths of revealed religion; but these latter, he now contends, present the same sort of analogies to the order and course of nature as do the former; and if it be a sufficient answer to the objections taken against the system of natural religion, that they may be paralleled by the arrangements of nature, which the Deists themselves recognised as the work of an all-wise and all-good God, and if a sufficient explanation of these is to be found in the fact that man cannot comprehend the whole of God's plan, and that that plan is carried out by means of general laws, then a similar line of defence must be

equally valid against the objections that are so commonly brought against revealed religion. It is to drawing out this argument in detail that the second part of the *Analogy* is mainly directed; but at the close Butler adds, by way of appendix, a chapter on "The Particular Evidence for Christianity," and in his final pages answers some objections which he thinks likely to be made against his method of arguing from the analogy of nature to religion. I propose in the following sections to examine separately the main positions which he advances.

I.

There was probably no argument more frequently advanced in depreciation of Christianity, and of revelation generally, by the Deists than that a revelation was unnecessary and superfluous.[1] But if superfluous, many went on to argue, then it becomes incredible; for we can hardly suppose that God could have vouchsafed a revelation which was to be of no practical use. Many of those who did not go so far as this were still inclined to make light of revelation and to treat it with neglect, on the ground that men could by "the light of nature" alone get on sufficiently well, and that revealed religion, as compared with reason, was of comparatively little value and use. It is, then, to the consideration of the importance of revealed religion, and of Christianity in particular, that the first chapter is addressed; for men will scarcely be brought seriously to consider that, of the importance of which they are not first convinced.[2]

The contention that men can get on sufficiently well by the light of reason alone, apart from all revelation, seems sufficiently disproved, Butler reasons, by the condition of the the heathen world. How debased for the most part are the heathen notions of God: how

[1] Above, Chap. IV. p. 138. [2] *Analogy*, II. i. § 2.

imperfect or erroneous are their conceptions of their moral duties and obligations. How little have they attended to, or retained, that law of nature, that original revelation, which Butler, in common with most of his contemporaries, believed to have been once written on their hearts. If here and there a man of superior intelligence, or of higher moral character than his neighbours, has reasoned out for himself the whole moral code, and has striven to practise it, how hard has he found it to make way against the prejudices and passions of those about him, or to obtain under such circumstances any acceptance for the Gospel which he has to proclaim![1] The light of nature is thus seen by the teaching of experience not to be sufficient for man's guidance on earth. But further than this, the importance of Christianity will be established if we consider the double relation in which it may be regarded as standing to the law of nature. On the one hand, it is an authoritative republication of that law; on the other, it supplements it by providing man with additional information. Christianity *reinforces* the law of nature by adding further evidence to that on which, in the first instance, that law rests; it makes that law plainer on many points; it provides in the Christian Church an organised society, and a visible machinery, directly intended to draw attention to its claims, and to see that it occupies a due place in the education of the young. Thus, while without Christianity the law of nature is apt to be obliterated or ignored, in Christian countries it can scarcely fail to command the attention which it deserves. Nor does the fact that Christianity has been perverted affect the validity of this argument. Any system may claim to be judged not by its perversions, but by that which it is capable of effecting. Reason itself has not always been rightly or wisely used.

[1] *Analogy*, II. i. § 8.

In the second place, the Christian revelation *supplements* the light of nature. It tells us of human corruption and "of a particular dispensation of Providence, carrying on by His Son and Spirit, for the recovery and salvation of mankind, who are represented in Scripture to be in a state of ruin."[1] Now, if we accept this revelation as true, the acceptance of it gives rise to and entails on our part certain duties, moral, and not merely positive in character, owed by us men, in virtue of the relation in which we stand to them, to the Son and to the Spirit. These duties, like other duties, cannot be neglected or disobeyed without peril and loss. They are the "religious regards" of "reverence, honour, love, trust, gratitude, fear, hope,"[2] which we ought to entertain both towards the Son and towards the Spirit. And if, further, God has provided us with a remedy by which we can escape from our fallen condition, and by the use of which we can render ourselves fit for a higher condition of happiness hereafter, it cannot be unimportant for us to know of that remedy, or to be informed of the course of conduct by which we may fit ourselves for that happiness. Nor are we to think (as is often done) that all that is matter of revelation is of the nature of positive command, and is therefore of slight importance as compared with the moral dictates of reason and conscience. Facts known by revelation may give rise to moral obligations, just as moral truths may require to be supplemented by positive commands. If Jesus be, as revelation asserts, the Son of God, and our Redeemer, love and gratitude to Him are matter of moral obligation; while the worship of God, being matter of moral obligation, as far as the fact of worship goes, is still matter of positive command, as far as the mode in which the worship is to be performed is concerned. The reason why obedience to positive commands is

[1] *Analogy*, II. i. § 16. [2] *Loc. cit.* § 20.

both in the Old and New Testaments made little of as compared with obedience to moral obligations, is this—that, for the most part, it is easier to obey positive precepts than to perform moral duties, and men are therefore too apt to excuse themselves for the nonperformance of the latter by punctilious obedience to the former; while really the latter are of the more certain and nearer obligation. The principle enunciated by our Lord, "I will have mercy and not sacrifice," has settled their relative importance once for all; yet the fact that moral precepts take precedence of positive rules does not absolve us from the necessity of obedience to the latter; if it can be shown that there are sufficient grounds for believing that such commands proceed really from God, to obey them becomes then matter of moral obligation.

Butler's defence of the importance of the Christian revelation, though satisfactory as far as it goes, is still somewhat marred by the utilitarian and limited spirit of his time. To represent Christianity as mainly valuable, on the ground that it helps to enforce or to supplement the light of nature, is to belittle its value. It undoubtedly does this, and we can claim, for Christian nations and for the Christian centuries, a distinct gain in point of practice over the pagan and heathen world, measured in part by the disappearance of slavery, by the growth of philanthropy, by the improvement in domestic life, and in the standard of purity; but to those who have accepted Christianity in any real sense it means much more than this. Their whole sense of their relation to God is completely altered in Christ; the Fatherhood of God acquires for them a new meaning; their love of God is transformed, their sense of sin deepened, their attitude to life and the business of life changed. For them the question "Is Christianity important?" scarcely needs an answer; their difficulty would rather be to conceive how it could be not important. And Butler had

himself, as we gather from other passages in his writings, much of this feeling towards Christianity; but here, as elsewhere, he was anxious to meet his opponents not on his ground but on theirs; to show that, if we descend to the lower platform and regard revealed religion merely as an adjunct to morality, still, even so, we cannot afford to dispense with its services; it is an important adjunct, one without which morality would fare but ill, even if it survived at all.

II.

The next chapter, which deals with the objection felt and brought against a revelation on the ground that it is miraculous—miraculous either in itself as being a communication made by God to man quite out of the ordinary course of nature, or else because it needs and rests upon miracles to attest its reality and authenticity[1]—seems to be one of the least satisfactory chapters in the whole work. Butler's contention in it is that the fact that revelation discloses to us matters which lie beyond the ordinary reach of our faculties to apprehend, and is in this sense miraculous, can furnish no valid objection against it, inasmuch as we are all bound to recognise that there is a large part of the universe which lies quite outside the reach of our ordinary means of apprehension. Our faculties, as we have seen already, carry us but a little way towards a knowledge of the universe as a whole; that God should by extraordinary means make known to us truths which lie beyond the range of our ordinary means of information has in it certainly nothing which is incredible or opposed to analogy. Nor are the facts which are thus made known, and which constitute the Christian scheme taken as a whole, at variance with the analogies presented by the natural and moral government of God.

[1] *Analogy*, II. ii. § 2.

This is a position which the next chapters are designed to establish. While thirdly, if, as seems probable, God completed creation by giving man a primitive revelation of Himself, this, at the outset of things, cannot have been contrary to the course of nature—for there was then no course of nature for it to be contrary to, nor can it have been, therefore, opposed to analogy. Lastly, the presumption against the occurrence of any particular event is before its occurrence so strong that the presumption against the occurrence of a miracle can scarcely be greater than that against the occurrence of any other particular event, certainly not greater than against the occurrence of such events as we recognise to be strange and abnormal.

It is to the last two arguments that exception may reasonably be taken. As to the former of them, the doctrine that man had an original revelation made to him, is one which Butler deliberately adopted, not here alone but throughout his writings. The doctrine meets with adherents even in our own days; and Butler is probably right in his contention that very few men have argued out or reached by any conscious process of reasoning their belief in a God. But while we admit this, the view which would now be more generally adopted is that man's fundamental religious beliefs are partly unconscious inferences from the phenomena of the external world, partly the direct result of his moral feelings and consciousness. The belief in God would be in this sense natural to man, in that it proceeds from his primitive instincts and unconscious reasonings, finding expression in the prophetic utterance of some gifted individual touched by the Spirit of God Himself: it is a revelation, in so far as man did not consciously argue out for himself the conclusion which he accepts; but it is not, as it were, an external revelation given *ab extra* to all men at a definite point in human history.

It is the final argument, however, that is most open to question. There can be, Butler says, no special presumption against a miracle, because the presumption against the occurrence of any particular event must, till that event actually occurs, always be enormous. But surely this is not the case; the rising of the sun to-morrow morning will be a particular event, yet the presumption is enormously strong, not against its occurrence, but against its non-occurrence. And why? Because we know that there are causes in operation which, unless prevented, will bring that event about. Even the appearance of a man of extraordinary ability or character like Cæsar or Napoleon is not, even antecedentally to the event, as improbable as the occurrence of a miracle. Why again? Because we know that there are causes actually in operation on the earth capable of producing such a result, since such exceptional men have, in the course of history, from time to time appeared. A miracle, on the other hand, regarded as a merely natural event, is almost incredible; there are *ex hypothesi* no causes in existence adequate to produce it; the presumption is enormously strong against it. But take into account the moral and supernatural world, and the improbability to a great extent disappears. But this is so, not on the ground on which Butler puts it, that the presumption is equally great against the occurrence of any particular fact or event before it has actually occurred—which we have seen is not the case; but because in a Personal God we recognise a cause adequate to produce a miracle, and in the attesting of a revelation to man we recognise an occasion sufficiently important to justify, at the bar of reason, the permission, or the actual working, of a miracle. If we have reason on independent grounds for the belief that God sent His Son to redeem the world (and, after all, nineteen

centuries of Christian experience and the permanence and prevalence of the Christian Church furnish some basis of independent testimony to the fact), it cannot be impossible that that Son should have had the power of working such miracles as the New Testament attributes to Him; while the authorisation of the claims which He made would furnish adequate reason for the display of the miraculous powers which He possessed. Such, rather than the more technical grounds which Butler advances, seem to be the reasons on which we should claim for the evidence advanced in support of miracles a right to be listened to and considered.

III.

The subject of which Butler treats in the third chapter is thus stated by him, "Of our incapacity of judging what were to be expected in a revelation; and the credibility, from analogy, that it must contain things appearing liable to objections." This chapter, with the next, forms the kernel of the second part of the *Analogy*. His object in it is to show that objections against the substance of Christianity, as distinct from objections against the evidence for it, are in a great measure frivolous;[1] that the claim which the Deists set up for reason to be a competent judge of the contents of revelation, and consequently to have a right to reject whatever does not at once meet with its approval, cannot be allowed. This line of argument (which Butler is careful to observe does not interfere with the legitimate claim of reason) undermines the whole Deist position; it shows, if it can be made good, that the Deists had overrated the powers of the instrument they had at their command, that they were attempting to use reason for a purpose it was incompetent to serve. Nature the Deists admitted to be the

[1] *Analogy*, II. iii. § 2.

work of a perfectly wise and good God. Yet in nature we are constantly meeting with arrangements that are not such as we should have expected from such an author, nor are they always even such as approve themselves directly to our reason. Can we be surprised if something of the same kind should occur within the sphere covered by revelation? Need we wonder if, here too, things that we should not have expected are to be met with, things that will not at once approve themselves to our judgment and reason? And "these observations, relating to the whole of Christianity, are applicable," continues Butler, "to inspiration in particular. As we are in no sort judges beforehand by what laws or rules, in what degree, or by what means it were to have been expected that God would naturally instruct us, so upon supposition of His affording us light and instruction by revelation, additional to what He has afforded us by reason and experience, we are in no sort judges by what methods and in what proportion it were to be expected, that this supernatural light and instruction would be afforded us."[1] The argument put in other words is this. Just as it is impossible to say why God should have afforded us those particular means of natural knowledge and that particular amount of information, through our senses, reason, and experience, which, as a matter of fact, He has afforded us,—since He might equally have given us more or might have given us less;—and just as, again, we could not have predicted beforehand the manner in which this knowledge or information would be acquired, and whether all men would acquire it equally; so, if extra knowledge were to be imparted by means of revelation, it seems obvious that we should not be able to judge *à priori* either of the amount or kind of knowledge which would be so imparted, nor how it

[1] *Analogy*, II. iii. § 7.

would be imparted, nor how the knowledge to be imparted would be communicated or preserved. But if we are thus incapable of judging beforehand what a revelation was likely to be, it seems absurd, when a revelation has been given, to find fault with it on the ground that either the revelation itself, or the mode of imparting and preserving it, are not such as we should have expected them to be.

Secondly, in the case of natural knowledge, neither is the amount of it, nor the order in which truths have been discovered, nor the methods of discovery by which they have been learnt, exactly such as we should have anticipated; *e.g.* those truths which are of the most immediate benefit to men are by no means those which are first learnt, or even most easily apprehended, and we should hardly have expected *à priori* that language, the instrument for communicating truth, would be liable to such defects as, in point of fact, we know it to be subject to. It need not surprise us, therefore, if the additional information conveyed by revelation is not precisely of the kind, of the amount, or the degree which we should have expected.

Nor, thirdly, is the fact, that those through whom the revelation came to men were not always such as made a good use of their exceptional gifts, any valid proof that the revelation made through their agency is not a genuine one. Those who have been endowed with the greatest gifts for acquiring natural knowledge have not been always those who have made the best use of the knowledge which they have acquired. In the one case and in the other God has not seen good to interfere with the free will and responsibility of individual men; and, as He allows them free will, there is of necessity a possibility that they may misuse their gifts. And, fourthly, if it be objected that Scripture represents the Christian dispensation to be a remedial scheme, and that it is

incredible that so many ages should have been allowed to pass "before a matter of such a sort, of so great and so general importance, was made known to mankind; and then that it should have been made to so small a part of them,"[1]—and this was one of the objections on which the Deists laid the greatest stress,—to this it may be answered that, in the case of the physical diseases from which men suffer, "the remedies existing in nature have been unknown to mankind for many ages, are known but to few now, probably many valuable ones are not known yet";[2] that such remedies are often difficult of application, and when they are most needed are constantly not to be obtained. "In a word, the remedies which nature has provided for diseases are neither certain, perfect, nor universal. Nor can we reasonably expect that they should be so, since to expect this would be equivalent to expecting that there should be no diseases at all to require a remedy."[3] Fifthly, in the last place, while admitting that the province of reason is to judge first of the sufficiency of the evidence for a revelation, and then of the morality of the revelation itself, Butler maintains with reference to this last point that, while there are particular acts enjoined or commended in Scripture which, if done by men without the special command of God to perform them, would be immoral, yet the fact that this command has been given entirely alters their character, and converts what would have been immoral into legitimate or even praiseworthy acts. If we admit that such acts are in a special way, as they undoubtedly are, liable to abuse by being mischievously copied without any sufficient divine warrant, still this only amounts to saying that revelation, like everything else, is liable to be put to a wrong use, and so forms part of our trial here.[4]

To most of Butler's positions in this chapter no

[1] *Analogy*, II. iii. § 23. [2] *Ibid.* § 24. [3] *Ibid.* §§ 24, 25. [4] *Ibid.* § 28.

exception can be taken, and he must be acknowledged to have made out on them a strong case against his deistical opponents. His remarks on inspiration in particular seem to have a special value and pertinence for us now. His contention, that since we are not good judges beforehand of the amount, degree, and kind of revelation which was likely to be vouchsafed to men, we are bound loyally to accept that kind and amount of it which reason and experience convince us have been actually given, should furnish us with real help in meeting the perplexities which recent criticism has raised respecting the amount and kind of inspiration of the different parts or books of the Old Testament. If the inspiration of these books is not of the amount or kind we had anticipated, or tradition and prejudice had led us to expect, why should we complain? If even they have been constructed differently from what we had supposed, being, as is now often affirmed, not the work of a single contemporary author, but collected in later times from a variety of different sources and traditions, still even so, we are not, as Butler says, in a position to deny *à priori* that this can possibly be the case. We must bow to the facts if the facts are plainly and sufficiently established. Inspiration, we must remember, does not cease to be real because it is not of the amount or kind which we once thought it to be, nor do the Old Testament books cease to contain a revelation even though they should be proved to have been produced in a different way from what we had once supposed. We have no means of judging of inspiration apart from the inspired books themselves; and the only safe course to adopt under these circumstances is to study humbly and sincerely the phenomena the writings actually present. While we need not accept as proved crude theories supported by little evidence, we may not, on the other hand, shut our eyes to well-established results,

even though these should conflict with traditional and unquestioned beliefs.

The only point on which Butler's teaching seems seriously to conflict with our modern notions is the solution he gives of the moral difficulties presented by parts of the Old Testament history. While admitting that reason requires that the principles embodied in any supposed revelation should be in harmony with the dictates of the moral law, with justice, veracity, purity, and good-will, yet he maintains that individual acts contravening these principles may still be permitted if they are done in obedience to a clear and well-attested command of God. He cites the partial extermination of the Canaanite nations by the Israelites as a case in point. This, he implies, though an act which would otherwise have been wrong, was yet rendered justifiable in the Israelites by its being done in accordance with an express command of God. But in the way of accepting such an explanation there is a double difficulty. First, it is difficult to believe that an act which would have been otherwise immoral for the doers of it can have been expressly commanded by God; and secondly, to admit the principle would be to open the door to the justification of all kinds of immoral acts, if only these were done in the name of religion. For in all ages men have been only too apt to persuade themselves that the wrong and cruel acts they have committed in the name of religion have been done in accordance with a supposed direct command of God. It was a perception of this fact that made the poet exclaim—

"Tantum religio potuit suadere malorum."

It is not thus that we can escape the difficulties which the imperfections of Old Testament morality at different points present. Surely the doctrine of development in revelation furnishes a truer and a safer method

of escape. God revealed Himself to the fathers by divers portions and in divers manners;[1] and we must not expect in those who were living in the twilight of a barbarous age and an imperfect revelation the perfect knowledge of God's will which we enjoy who walk in the full light of the Gospel dispensation. To the Israelites, still fierce and brutal, only lately emancipated from slavery, the extermination of their enemies, who were also the enemies of God, might well present itself as an imperative duty, and so a divine command: we have come to see that there is a more excellent way; and that, if we are still bound to fight with our enemies and to defend a just cause, yet it is our duty to spare those who yield, and those who, like women and children, are incapable of defending themselves.

The fourth chapter is a kind of appendix to, or continuation of, the third. In the third Butler had shown that we are not competent judges beforehand of the degree, method, or manner of the revelation which God was likely to vouchsafe to man; in the fourth he advances a special reason to show that we are not competent judges of the contents of a revelation when it has been made. The reason why we are not so is, that Christianity, like nature, presents every appearance of being a scheme or plan which is, and can be, but imperfectly comprehended by us. Now, in cases where we fail to realise at all, or imperfectly realise, the ends aimed at, we needs cannot judge of the suitability of the means (and all the more where the ends are sought to be obtained through the operation of general laws); and it follows that, as this seems to be the case with regard to the Christian dispensation, we are necessarily imperfect judges of the contents of that dispensation. The position, then, as Butler points out, is very similar in the sphere of grace to what it is in the sphere of

[1] Hebrews i. 1.

nature. Just as (in the way already described[1]) the apparent anomalies and objectionable features which present themselves in nature are probably to be explained by the consideration that nature constitutes a vast scheme or plan, the larger part of which lies absolutely beyond our ken, so the apparent anomalies and objectionable features which occur in the Christian dispensation are most likely to be accounted for in a similar manner. For the Christian dispensation, as it has its roots far back in the past, so has its consummation far forward in the future; and the part of it which is played upon this earth represents, it may well be, but a small part of the whole scheme or plan involved in it. It need not surprise us then if, when we know so little, puzzling features should present themselves in that small part which we do know; and if, when we can but dimly perceive the ends aimed at, the means adopted shall seem open now and again to apparent objection.[2]

And to a more special objection brought against the whole working of Christianity a somewhat similar answer may be given. For it is sometimes objected that the Christian dispensation supposes God to make use of means apparently cumbrous and slow in operation, to bring about the ends which He desires to compass. To this it may be answered that in nature, equally as in the Christian dispensation, God seems, at least to our apprehension (for to Him who sees all things at once the distinction may be absurd and meaningless), to make use of means and processes which are slow and even apparently cumbrous to bring about His ends; consequently that He should act thus in saving men from their sins, and perfecting in them the Christian character, cannot be regarded as any exception to the general method of His working. "The mills of God

[1] *Analogy*, I. vii. [2] *Analogy*, II. iv. § 6.

grind slowly," the proverb says, "but they grind exceeding small." The force of this analogy has for us been greatly strengthened by the doctrines of "natural selection" and "development"; if the physical world has been brought to its present condition by such age-long processes, need we be surprised if in the moral and spiritual sphere the action of God should appear slow and His processes there also cumbrous and indirect? Here, too, it may well be that His ways are not as our ways, nor His thoughts as our thoughts.

IV.

With the fifth chapter Butler begins the discussion of some of the more particular objections which had been brought against Christianity, and first of the fundamental but difficult question of the mediatorial work of Christ, and the redemption of the world by Him.

1. That there are many analogies in the natural world for the mediatorial work of Christ it is not hard to establish. Many of the blessings which we enjoy have been secured, many of the ills which would otherwise befall us are warded off, by the mediation or help of others. All the surroundings on which so much of our happiness depends, and by which we are protected against so many ills, are the result of the energy and pains of other men in the past; we have not made them for ourselves; to others we are indebted for our nurture, our education, and often even for the necessaries of life.

2. If we suppose the need for the mediatorial work of Christ to arise in the following way, we can easily understand how that work can take effect. In this life we see that many of the ill effects of folly, or of wrong-doing, follow from our acts by way of natural consequence; nor are these ill effects always, or perhaps even often, mitigated by our repentance; they continue and operate whether we repent or not. And

yet God has provided in many cases ways through which those ill effects may be mitigated or even entirely prevented, and that sometimes by measures which we can ourselves adopt, but more often through the help and instrumentality of others; such arrangements we call part of the mercifulness, or compassion, of nature. Now suppose that in another life ill consequences, *i.e.* punishments, follow on sin (as they well may), by way of natural effects; it will not follow that such ill effects can be averted, or even mitigated, by repentance. Yet here again analogy seems to suggest that such ill effects, in spite of the failure of repentance to remove them, may still be mitigated by the intervention of others, by the mediation of our Lord Jesus Christ. Such a mediation may well be alike appropriate, requisite and effectual.[1]

3. If we next ask how this mediation was effected, while the matter must remain to a great extent a mystery (and Butler frankly admits that it must do so), there are yet three principal aspects under which in Scripture the mediatorial work of Christ is presented; He was, in the first place, a Prophet, "the light of the world," "the light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world"; teaching us authoritatively what we are to do and what to avoid if we would escape from "the wrath to come," the ill effects which will follow wrong-doing even in this world. In His capacity of Prophet, He further left us an example —the one perfect example—that we should follow in His steps.[2] He was, in the second place, a King, founding a kingdom which "is not of this world,"— "a church to be to mankind a standing memorial of religion, and invitation to it: which He promised to be with always, even to the end."[3] Thirdly, he offered Himself as a propitiatory sacrifice and made atonement for the sins of the world. It is this last

[1] *Analogy*, II. iv. § 11. [2] § 15. [3] § 16.

aspect of Christ's work which is, as Butler admits, the greatest mystery, and the one to which exception is most often taken.[1] With regard to it, Butler shelters himself, in the first place, under the plea of ignorance.[2] "Since we neither know by what means punishment in the future state would have followed wickedness in this; nor in what manner it would have been inflicted, had it not been prevented; nor all the reasons why its infliction would have been needful; nor the particular nature of that state of happiness, which Christ is gone to prepare for His disciples; and since we are ignorant how far anything which we could do would, alone and of itself, have been effectual to prevent that punishment to which we were obnoxious, and recover that happiness which we had forfeited; it is most evident we are not judges, antecedently to revelation, whether a mediator was or was not necessary to obtain those ends; to prevent that future punishment, and bring mankind to the final happiness of their nature." And further, since, granted a mediator to be necessary, "we are not judges of the whole nature of His office, or the several parts of which it consists; of what was fit and requisite to be assigned to Him, in order to accomplish the ends of Providence in the appointment;" it follows from this, "that to object against the expediency or usefulness of particular things revealed to have been done or suffered by Him, because we do not see how they were conducive to those ends, is highly absurd. Yet nothing is more common to be met with than this absurdity."[3]

But secondly, the idea of sinners being relieved from the consequences of their sins, by an act of vicarious suffering voluntarily undertaken on their behalf, finds many counterparts and analogies in the common experience of everyday life. We constantly see cases in

[1] *Analogy*, II. v. § 18. [2] *Ibid.* § 20. [3] *Ibid.* § 21.

which the innocent suffer for the guilty; and not unfrequently it happens that this suffering, voluntarily undertaken by the innocent, wards off from the guilty the ill effects of their evil deeds. "Men by their follies, for instance, run themselves into extreme distress; into difficulties which would be absolutely fatal to them, were it not for the interposition and assistance of others. God commands by the law of nature that we afford them this assistance, in many cases when we cannot do it without very great pains, and labour, and sufferings to ourselves."[1] Yet no one feels in such cases that injustice is done when the innocent thus suffers for the guilty; why, then, should we feel it injustice if sinners are pardoned in virtue of the voluntarily undertaken sacrifice of Christ? In conclusion he thus sums up the matter: "Let reason be kept to; and if any part of the Scripture account of the redemption of the world by Christ can be shown to be really contrary to it, let the Scripture, in the name of God, be given up; but let not such poor creatures as we go on objecting against an infinite scheme, that we do not see the necessity or usefulness of all its parts, and call this reasoning; and, which still further heightens the absurdity in the present case, parts which we are not actively concerned in."[2]

So far Butler; and yet, since in spite of his arguments and the strong plea which he urges against our judging, when we are not confessedly acquainted with all the circumstances of the case, there are times when the idea of the vicarious suffering of Christ seems to affect us with a sense of moral shock, and the whole subject becomes to us once more involved in darkness, it may be worth while to add to what Butler has here said a few considerations which modern discussions have brought, perhaps, into greater clearness and prominence.

[1] *Analogy*, II. v. § 22. [2] *Ibid.* § 24.

1. In the first place, attention has been called to, and stress laid upon, the purely voluntary character of the sacrifice of Christ. The point had not indeed been neglected, or passed over by Butler; the utmost that can be said is that he may not have given to it the prominence which it merits. But this voluntarily undertaken character of the suffering alters, it is contended,[1] the whole idea of vicarious sacrifice, removing it into an entirely new sphere. Where an innocent victim is involuntarily substituted for a guilty, the main point to be secured was held to be that the pains or penalty endured by the innocent should be equal, or adequate, to those which were, so to speak, due from, or owed by, the guilty. But where an innocent being wards off by voluntary self-sacrifice the punishment due to the guilty, any such an idea is absolutely excluded. The pardon is granted in this case, not because the claims of justice are held to be fully satisfied, but because the love which has been displayed by the innocent towards the guilty ennobles and wins favour for the guilty man himself. So may it be before God in the case of a guilty race. The sacrifice, the advocacy of the Son, commends those who have sinned to the mercy of the Father.

2. We must further remember that in the Godhead the unity between the Father and the Son is complete. The compassion that is expressed through the Son the Father also feels. "God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son to the end that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life."[2] It is not as if the Father were all justice, the Son all compassion. Rather, the will of the Father and of the Son is so completely one that whatever the Father wills, that the Son also wills, and whatever the Son wills that the Father

[1] Mozley's *University Sermons*, Sermon VIII. [2] St. John iii. 36.

wills too. It is the making an undue separation between the Father and the Son which constitutes more than half the difficulty of the atonement. If we once realise that the Father gains, as it were, the power to forgive sin by an act of self-sacrificing love in sending the Son to die for sin, then the moral difficulty which is felt in that God seems to accept the sacrifice of Christ in the place of the punishment of the sinner is almost entirely taken away. Put the doctrine as St. Paul puts it—"God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not reckoning unto them their trespasses,"[1] and God's pardon of fallen man, so far from exciting in us a sense of injustice, cannot but command, as it has commanded throughout Christendom, feelings of the deepest gratitude, adoration, reverence, and devotion.[2]

3. And then another point on which Butler has, perhaps, hardly laid sufficient stress is, that the forgiveness which the sacrifice of Christ procures for mankind is not an unconditional forgiveness. Forgiveness is made everywhere throughout the New Testament dependent on faith in Christ and on repentance which follows from the possession of faith. Without faith and repentance Christ's mediation will not save us; but granted this condition (and the self-sacrifice of Christ has been of all forces in the world the one best calculated to secure this condition), then God's forgiveness can never be described as an unjust forgiveness. Such a forgiveness would not be unjust in the case of a man towards his fellow-men. To forgive a man if he repent, and we are assured of the genuineness of his repentance, is not a weakness but a duty. How, then, shall we venture to affirm that a forgiveness conditional on the repentance which the love of Christ calls forth can be unjust in God? And if, further, we hold that the punishment of sin mainly consists in

[1] 2 Cor. v. 19. [2] Moberly, *Atonement and Personality*, ch. viii.

begetting in men a temper which renders them unfit for the enjoyment of the presence of God,—and this is perhaps as definite a conception of the nature of future punishment as we are able to form,—then we can understand how the mediation of Christ and His voluntary self-sacrifice on the Cross in winning men from their sins delivers them also at the same time from the consequences of their sins. With the abolition of the love of sin the evil temper, which means alienation from and hostility to God, disappears also. "There is therefore now no condemnation for them that are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." For they have received "the Spirit of adoption whereby we cry Abba, Father."[1] Not that I would venture to claim that any such suggestions as these remove all the difficulty. There remains, as Butler maintains, an element of mystery which we cannot hope fully to comprehend. But then, we must remember that we see at best "through a glass darkly," and are dealing with issues part of which lie entirely beyond our ken. In dealing with difficulties in such matters the plea of ignorance will largely avail.

V.

Two of the arguments which Tindal had most pressed against the truth of Christianity had been its want of universality and the imperfection of the evidence that could be advanced in its support, the supposed deficiency in the proof of it. The knowledge, he urged, said to have been imparted by the Christian revelation has extended to so small a part of the human race that, if we accept it as a real revelation, we must suppose that God has favourites among the races of mankind; at least, that He gives to some opportunities which He denies to others. Yet is such a view com-

[1] Romans viii. 1, 15.

patible with the justice of God? The great place which the vast multitudes of Chinese, then first beginning to be fully known to Western Europe, were at that time filling in the public eye, imparted additional emphasis to this argument; so that, as Butler says,[1] "the objection against revelation from its not being universal is often insisted on as of great weight."

Yet this objection is surely sufficiently disposed of by the following argument which Butler advances. As a matter of fact and experience we find that all creatures are by no means placed in an equally favourable condition for obtaining temporal happiness. The gifts which God bestows He gives in different degrees and amounts to different species; and even among creatures of the same species He grants His favours with the most promiscuous variety. All men are not equally endowed with health or strength, with prudence or wealth. We may further observe, both that among those to whom a revelation has been given, it has been given with different degrees of evidence and clearness at different times, and that its claims on mankind are even now presented in the case of different peoples with varying degrees of cogency and force; yet all these phenomena have their parallel in God's dealings with men in other matters beside revelation. The light of reason itself is not granted, any more than that of revelation, to all men equally; nor are all men equally capable of using the reason they do possess to the best advantage. The truths of natural knowledge, again, like those of revelation, have become the common heritage of mankind through the agency of gifted individuals, or gifted races; very small is the number of those who have been able to discover them, or reason them out, for themselves. Some nations, we may also observe, exhibit more prudence in the conduct of their affairs

[1] *Analogy*, II. vi. § 1.

than do others; some are placed in more difficult and trying circumstances, others in less. What God's object is in constituting all this variety and diversity we can only guess, and are necessarily much in the dark about it. But the universal prevalence throughout nature of endless variety proves at least that diversity cannot be at variance with His general purposes or with His moral government of the universe. What gives an appearance of injustice to such an arrangement is that we are apt to forget that God will not judge all men alike; that no more will be required of any one than his opportunities warrant; and that a man will be accepted according to what he has, not according to what he has not.[1]

The difficulty which was supposed to arise from the scantiness and insufficiency of the proof of revelation Butler meets in another way. Had God really given a revelation, Tindal contended, He would have given unmistakable proof of its truth and credibility. But how, asks Butler, are we justified in assuming this? In all practical matters we have to conduct our temporal affairs on the strength of evidence that is, at the most, probable. Probability, as he puts it elsewhere, is the guide of life. There can be nothing anomalous, then, if the evidence by which we have to guide ourselves in matters of religion, which are practical also, be only probable.[2] Besides this, the doubtfulness of the evidence for religion may be, for some men who are naturally disposed to virtue, the chief part of their probation; for all it constitutes a part of their moral discipline. "It is a moral duty, on a matter of great importance like religion, to give due weight and attention to the evidence which is advanced in its support; and, where the evidence falls short of being demonstrative, to give such evidence its due and proper

[1] 2 Cor. viii. 12. [2] *Analogy*, II. vi. § 2.

value tests men more, and is more of a probation for them, than would be the case were the evidence overwhelming."[1] To be doubtful, again, about any particular matter is very different from knowing that it is not true, and involves very different obligations. If the thing may be true, *i.e.* if there are some reasons for thinking it is true, then, if the matter is one of importance, we are bound to give full weight to this consideration, and, where there are no clear reasons dictating an opposite course, we may be as much bound to proceed on the assumption that the case is so, as if it were actually proved to be so.[2] We have once more carefully to consider whether the apparent doubtfulness of the evidence may not be more due to our unwillingness to accept the conclusion than to inherent defects in the evidence itself. It is certain we are always apt to undervalue the evidence for a conclusion we do not wish to believe; and since, in a way, the truths of religion must always be unpalatable to us, involving, as they do, if accepted, certain strict and far-reaching obligations, we have consequently a certain bias to believe them not true, or at anyrate not proved; and a need to be on the watch against this bias unduly influencing our judgment. To overcome this bias towards disbelief involves a certain effort; and the making this effort may therefore form a part, and an important part, of the discipline of our lives and of our state of probation. And yet again, we must not unduly depreciate the measure of the proof given. It has been found sufficient, when duly attended to, to convince plain and honest men during many generations and in many different countries.

To these considerations advanced by Butler he adds another to which Mr. Bagehot has drawn particular attention in a remarkable "Essay on the 'Ignor-

[1] *Analogy*, II. vi. §§ 10, 11. [2] Chap. vi. § 12.

ance of Man.'"[1] Is it not necessary, the writer there asks, if disinterested virtue is to be possible, that the evidence for any system of revealed religion should be short of demonstrative? Were truths such as the moral superintendence of God, His reward of virtue, His punishment of vice, forced, as it were, on our minds by overwhelming evidence, so that we could feel no doubt about them, would not the inevitable result be that, in spite of ourselves, we should be rendered virtuous by nothing else than the hope of reward, and be deterred from vice solely by the fear of punishment? As things are now, we believe in systems of religion, in the truths of Christianity above all, because they fall in with and are confirmed by our deepest moral convictions; valuing goodness for its own sake, we believe that, as Christianity declares, it will be rewarded because it deserves to be so; detesting vice as vice, we equally believe that it will be punished, because that is its proper and appropriate fate. The deeper our moral convictions, the clearer our belief in the revealed system which falls in with those convictions is likely to be. But were an intellectual belief in our religious system forced upon us by an overwhelming array of external proof, appealing primarily to our reason and not to our moral nature, a disinterested love of goodness would cease to be possible, and so would a disinterested hatred of sin. As it is, the evidence is sufficient if we are disposed to trust it, but not more than sufficient. In this way our readiness to yield assent to evidence which is not overwhelming, and to hold to our assent where once we have yielded it, even under the pressure of doubt and of apparent intellectual difficulty, may well form, as Butler contends, a very real and important part of our moral probation.

[1] *Literary Studies*, vol. iii., Essay V.

VI.

Chapter vii., which deals with the particular evidence for Christianity, is, perhaps, the only chapter of the *Analogy* of which it could fairly be said that it is antiquated and out of date. That in some sense it is so is allowed by Mr. Gladstone himself. In his opening note upon it he observes:[1] "After the discussions of the last century and a half Butler would, perhaps, have somewhat altered what he has written respecting the twin offices of miracle and prophecy as evidences of revealed religion." Yet it is more in the form than in the substance of what he says that Butler would probably see cause to make alterations, and in the relative importance to be attached to the different topics on which he touches. What he regarded as primary we are inclined to consider secondary; while to some of the arguments which he looks upon as secondary and subordinate, we should assign now a leading place. Still, it is to be observed that the germs of almost all that has been subsequently advanced are to be found in his treatment of the subject; and later thinkers have only developed or brought into prominence hints which he suggested.

1. Butler finds the two "direct and fundamental proofs of Christianity" to be miracles and the fulfilment, or, as he calls it the completion, of prophecy. I suppose that, while we should all still regard these two as very important elements in the complex proof, we should yet be inclined to rank as co-ordinate with them the proof derived from what has been called "the moral miracle of our Lord's unique and sinless personality," as well as the evidence afforded by the existence of the Christian Church and the influence it has exercised alike on individuals and on society at large. Both these points are dwelt upon by Butler as factors entering

[1] *Analogy*, II. vii. § 2, note 1.

into the complex proof, but we should be disposed to give them greater prominence than that which he assigns to them.

2. Agreeing in this with most of his contemporaries, Butler ascribes to our Lord's miracles a share in awakening faith in the earliest believers, which can scarcely be justified historically. Miracles were never, or scarcely ever, performed by our Lord for the purpose of producing belief,—rather, the part which they play is to confirm and justify a faith that is already existent. Faith is described more frequently as the condition than as the result, of the miracle. "He could there do no mighty work . . . and He marvelled because of their unbelief."[1] "O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt."[2] Faith throughout the Gospel history is aroused in the first instance by the teaching and the personality of Christ; miracles come in to confirm and deepen the impression that has been already made. And as it was in our Lord's own lifetime, so was it also for the most part with regard to the spread of the Gospel by the Apostles. Miracles, except the miracle of the resurrection (and that has for the Apostles a moral and spiritual even more than a directly evidential value), are scarcely ever put forward as the fundamental basis on which the faith of the converts should rest. The message of the Gospel contains in itself—in the appeal it makes to the hearts and consciences of all men—its own evidence. In the Epistles of St. Paul our Lord's miracles, with the exception of that of the resurrection, are nowhere directly referred to. Even in the early apologists and the sub-apostolic fathers surprisingly little stress is laid upon them. They are indeed taken for granted, but are hardly ever put forward as the ground on which faith should ultimately rest. What Butler has

[1] St. Mark vi. 5. [2] St. Matt. xv. 28.

to say about the strength and the severely tested character of the evidence for them; of the contemporary witness borne to them; of the publicity which attached to them; of the unique position which miracles occupy in relation to Judaism and Christianity—these being the only two religions in the history of the world which have ventured to base their claim to credit on miracles alleged to have been publicly performed, and capable, therefore, of being publicly examined,[1] — all this is indeed excellently and soberly stated, is of great importance and worthy of careful consideration. Yet nowadays we are inclined to invert the argument which Butler propounded; and instead of saying we believe Jesus to be the Son of God, because He wrought miracles, and miracles of such a kind and tested in such ways, we should rather put the case thus. Believing Christ to be the Son of God, because of His unique personality, His sinlessness, the gracious words that proceeded out of His mouth; because of the great part which the Church He founded has played in human history; because, above all, of the redeeming influence which faith in Him has had and still has on the souls and lives of all that believe in Him: we cannot but believe that He should have worked miracles, and miracles of the kind ascribed to Him in the Gospel narrative,—miracles, that is, of love, of redemption, of healing, of restoration to life. Thus, then, we now once more assign to miracles the position which in the first spread of Christianity we believe them to have originally occupied. We accept them as signs confirmatory of a truth which on other grounds we have already embraced; necessary results, and so also necessary supports, of the faith that Jesus is the Son of God.

3. Nor is there less change in our attitude towards what Butler has put forward as the other direct and

[1] *Analogy*, II. vii. §§ 8–10.

fundamental proof of Christianity—the fulfilment, or "completion," of prophecy. The fulfilment of prophecy, in the precise sense in which Butler uses the term,—the literal fulfilment, at a particular time, of definite texts or predictions,—can no longer be regarded as a primary proof of Christianity at all. The change in point of view has been mainly due to those critical and historical studies in which our age has been so prolific. These have partly had the effect of raising a doubt whether a good deal of what has hitherto been looked on as prophecy can properly be regarded as such, in view of the altered date ascribed to many of the writings of the Old Testament; partly, they have shown that so many of the prophecies have reference, in the first instance, to the special needs and circumstances of the time at which they were uttered, that it is doubtful whether we are justified in attributing to them, as far as the prophet's own intention was concerned, any other bearing; and though we may now see that the stream of prophecy, viewed as a whole, leads up to a more and more enlarged and spiritual conception of deliverance and redemption, which finds its complete fulfilment only in that world-redemption, that "saving His people from their sins," which the Saviour wrought; yet from the prophet himself no less than his hearers and contemporaries this truth was hidden, and his commission was to guide, rebuke, counsel, and enlighten those among whom his lot was immediately cast. But though the argument from prophecy has thus altered in form, it must not be thought that it has ceased to have weight. If we can trace, as we undoubtedly can, throughout all the earlier history a gradual preparation for the coming of the Christ, so that all the previous history points up to Him, and finds in Him its purpose and explanation, just as subsequent history looks back to

Him and finds in Him its starting-point and central figure, then a prophetic element in history can scarcely be denied. And if we find, further, the history itself so planned and directed as to be an ever-developing preparation for His coming, so that in Him were fulfilled the aspirations, hopes, and yearnings which had gradually taken shape in the writings of the prophets and wise men who had preceded Him, we have an argument for regarding Christ's appearance "in the fulness of time" as being part of a divinely ordained plan quite as strong as that which can be gathered from the individual fulfilment of particular predictions.

4. There is another part of Butler's argument of which time and discussion have certainly done nothing to diminish the force,—his contention, I mean, as to the complex character of the proof of Christianity and the need there consequently is that all the converging lines of it should be taken and weighed together. "The evidence," he pertinently observes, "is of the kind upon which most questions of difficulty, in common practice, are determined—evidence, arising from various coincidences, which support and confirm each other, and in this manner prove with more or less certainty the point under consideration."[1] What, then, are the different lines of proof which thus converge and have thus consequently all to be taken into account? They are partly moral, partly intellectual. The moral grounds are such as these—the influence which Christianity has exerted and continues to exert both on society at large, and still more on the lives of individuals who cordially embrace it; the capacity it has shown to meet and satisfy the needs and aspirations of many varying races, in many different stages of civilisation; the hold it has managed to establish and maintain on the most

[1] *Analogy*, II. vii. §§ 35–38.

progressive, even more than on the more backward, races of mankind; the permanence of its influence, in spite of opposition and of the many and various attacks that have been made upon it. The chief intellectual proof, in addition to the arguments from miracles and prophecy which have been already discussed, is to be found in the fact that while Christianity has appealed to and satisfied men of the greatest intellectual power, no other explanation of the universe, or account of human life, has been able long to maintain its hold on the more reasonable portion of mankind. This or that other system may have been popular for a time, and made many adherents; but the power of such has speedily waned, and left Christianity in almost undisputed possession of the field. The incarnation of the Son of God has been the rock on which the Church has been built; and, so far, the gates of Hell have not prevailed against it.

VII.

In the two remaining sections, chapter viii. and the Conclusion, Butler first attempts to meet certain objections which he considers likely to be felt by the world at large, or to be urged by his opponents, against his whole method of reasoning from analogy; and then proceeds to estimate, as carefully as may be, what general effect his argument ought in reason to have on the minds of his readers.

His whole method of argument he feels himself to be too little convincing and demonstrative, pitched in too low a key, for the taste and temper of his times. We know, as a matter of fact, that after the appearance of the *Analogy* criticisms of this kind were passed upon it. Butler was pronounced to be "somewhat too little vigorous," "not sufficiently positive and persuasive."

What the age demanded was a vigorous and demonstrative proof of the Being and Attributes of God and of the plain obligations of morality, such as Clarke was supposed lately to have supplied in his Boyle Lectures; less trenchant proofs were only too liable to be neglected or even derided. "Ridicule, unanswerable ridicule, was apt to be applied to show such arguments in a disadvantageous light."[1] It is against this prevailing temper that he ventures in his last chapter to protest; and tries in it to advance pleas which shall indicate the right of a more humble and less self-confident mode of argument to be listened to and respected.

1. In the first place, it is likely, he says, to be contended that to meet the objections which have been raised to revealed religion, by showing that similar objections may be urged against the assumed truths of natural religion, and against much which is to be found in the arrangements and course of nature, is "a poor thing." What is wanted, it is urged, is that the objections against both systems should be cleared up, not that we should meet one set of difficulties by starting another in a new quarter.[2] But this demand to have all difficulties cleared up is really an unreasonable one. All difficulties cannot be cleared up except by entering into the whole plan or scheme of God's government; and this we men are obviously incapable of doing. God's plan stretches away beyond our ken, and we can know but a part, probably but a small part, of His whole design. Further, to point out that those who would upset revelation on the ground of difficulties urged against it would have, on what are practically the same grounds, to abandon belief in God's moral government of the world, and even in His government of it at all, is,

[1] *Analogy*, II. viii. § 28. There is probably a reference here to Shaftesbury's thesis that ridicule is the test of truth.

[2] *Ibid.* § 2.

Butler maintains, a perfectly legitimate line of argument, and one of real weight. For if it be admitted, and it was at that time generally admitted, that such objections are, in the case of nature, not sufficient to overthrow our belief in God's authorship and government of the world, a revelation, which also comes from God, would be likely to exhibit the same kind of characteristics which are to be found in nature; and, if so, the same kind of difficulties too. But if these difficulties are held not to be sufficient to shake our faith in the one case, why should they do so in the other?

2. A second objection, which he thinks likely to be put forward, is to this effect: that, on his own showing, the evidence for Christianity is so complex, and so obscured by many difficulties, that the case for it amounts only to a probable one; and it is exceedingly unlikely that, in a matter of such importance, God should have left us to the guidance of only probable evidence. Yet surely, replies Butler, such an objection is sufficiently met if it be shown, as he has shown, that in our temporal concerns God constantly leaves us to the guidance of very similar evidence. For if this be so there can clearly be no impossibility that in matters of religion God should act as He acts with regard to our temporal interests. If, again, in the case of these concerns, we do not consider the imperfection of the evidence, on the strength of which we have to act, any sufficient reason either for abandoning the pursuit of our earthly happiness, or for neglecting to consider the best means by which that happiness may be secured, why should we be any more disposed to do this where our eternal happiness is in question? Is not this here, too, the reasonable course to adopt—accepting the evidence we have for what it is worth, to consider what our future happiness is likely to consist in, and then to take the best means which are within our power, and which our

knowledge reveals to us, to secure that happiness for ourselves?[1]

3. If, thirdly, it is objected that his argument fails, after all, "to justify the ways of God to man," Butler's answer is that to do this is not his primary object and concern. His object rather is to point out to men their duty to God and to themselves, to make it clear how they ought in reason to behave. Yet his argument goes at least thus far towards justifying God's ways, that it shows that, in the absence of more extended knowledge, we can never have the right to pronounce the ways of God unjust; since what appears to us unjust from our present narrow point of view may well from a more extended outlook be seen to be necessary, and right, and just. Besides, if the doctrines of revelation cannot be fully justified, the same may be said of God's ways in nature; and the contents of revelation can be made credible or even probable, as matters of fact, even though, with our limited range of knowledge, we may not be able fully to explain or justify them.[2]

4. Lastly if the incompleteness of the proof be insisted upon, and used as a positive argument (as it never ought to be) against the truth of revelation, it will be necessary to insist, as has been already done,[3] that this very incompleteness in the proof may be a part, or form a side, of our probation, strengthening our moral nature by leading us to trust our higher and deeper instincts even in cases where reason cannot see its way perfectly clearly. Something of the same kind has often to be done even in worldly affairs by those who would lead their lives worthily and nobly; even here we have often to trust our best instincts, and act upon them in the absence of complete and definite proof.[4]

Nor must it be forgotten, Butler urges, that through-

[1] *Analogy*, II. viii. § 8.
[2] *Ibid.* §§ 10, 11.
[3] *Ibid.* II. vi. § 17.
[4] *Ibid.* II. viii. § 21.

out his book he has been conducting his argument not on his own premises, but on those of his opponents. A stronger case might, he believes, have been made out, had he felt justified in assuming two principles, respecting which he feels no doubt himself, but which, because they are disputed, he thinks it better not to take for granted. These principles are human free-will, and that of the moral fitness and unfitness of actions (*i.e.* their inherent rightness or wrongness) prior to all will whatsoever. After bidding his readers bear this disadvantage in mind, he thus sums up his whole position: "Hence, therefore, may be observed distinctly what is the force of this treatise. It will be, to such as are convinced of religion upon the proof arising out of the two last-mentioned principles, an additional proof and a confirmation of it; to such as do not admit these principles, an original proof of it, and a confirmation of that proof. Those who believe will here find the scheme of Christianity cleared of objections, and the evidence of it in a peculiar manner strengthened; those who do not believe will at least be shown the absurdity of all attempts to prove Christianity false, the plain undoubted credibility of it; and I hope a good deal more."[1]

In the Conclusion he passes once more in review the main steps in the argument which has now been brought to a close. After expressing his surprise that the claims of religion should be as often neglected as they are, he goes on to point out that the supposed difficulties in the way of accepting it have all been met in a manner which at least his opponents must find it very difficult to dispute; that, on the other hand, the evidence in its favour, though not demonstrative, is as complete as that which we have constantly to act upon in the ordinary concerns of everyday life. He thus sums up the result, to which he holds that even his adver-

[1] *Analogy*, II. viii. § 27.

saries ought to be brought. "With regard to Christianity, it will be observed that there is a middle between the full satisfaction of the truth of it and a satisfaction of the contrary. The middle state of mind between these two consists in a serious apprehension that it may be true, joined with doubt whether it be so. And this, upon the best judgment I am able to make, is," he proceeds, "as far towards speculative infidelity as any sceptic can at all be supposed to go who has had true Christianity, with the proper evidence for it, laid before him, and has in any tolerable measure considered them. For I would not be mistaken to comprehend all who have ever heard of it; because it seems evident that in many countries, called Christian, neither Christianity, nor its evidence, are fairly laid before men. And in places where both are, there appear to be some who have very little attended to either, and who reject Christianity with a scorn proportionate to their inattention; and yet are by no means without understanding in other matters. Now it has been shown that a serious apprehension that Christianity may be true, lays persons under the strictest obligations of a serious regard to it throughout the whole of their life; a regard not the same exactly, but in many respects nearly the same, with what a full conviction of its truth would lay them under.

"Lastly, it will appear that blasphemy and profaneness —I mean with regard to Christianity—are absolutely without excuse. For there is no temptation to it but from the wantonness of vanity or mirth; and these considering the infinite importance of the subject, are no such temptations as to afford any excuse for it."[1]

The passage is instructive not only as being a good illustration of the extreme moderation with which Butler states his case, and of the care he takes to avoid

[1] *Analogy*, II. ix. §§ 20, 21.

even the least appearance of exaggeration, but also for the light it throws on the atmosphere of indifference and even profaneness in which he felt himself to live. He seemed to himself — nor was the impression wholly a false one—to be "a voice crying in the wilderness," a voice which was drowned by opposition, or what was almost worse, smothered by indifference. The higher principles, to which he would fain have made appeal, seemed to him so certain to fall on deaf ears that, abandoning them, he is sometimes content to argue with his opponents on those lower grounds of enlightened selfishness which were then regarded as the only true and reasonable principles of action. And his argument, in our eyes, suffers sometimes in consequence. But even at this lower level there is a seriousness and sobriety in his reasonings which saves them always from contempt, and convinces us that he himself lived habitually amid nobler thoughts, and that his own actions were determined by no mere questions of nicely calculated less and more.

CHAPTER VII

THE TWO DISSERTATIONS OF PERSONAL IDENTITY AND OF THE NATURE OF VIRTUE

THESE two dissertations, Butler tells us in the Advertisement, he had in the original draft of the *Analogy* incorporated in that treatise, designing the first to stand a part of chapter i., which treats of a future life; while the other was to make a part of chapter iii., on the "Moral Government of God." As, however, on second thoughts, these episodes seemed to him not sufficiently closely connected with the main subject of the treatise to justify their insertion, he preferred in the end to keep them separate. Since, however, they both serve to illustrate important points in his system, and obviate objections which may be, and have been, urged against it, it seems well to add a short chapter upon them, so as to complete our review of his whole philosophy.

1. In the dissertation on Personal Identity Butler deals with certain difficulties which had been raised as to the possibility of a future life, on the ground of the supposed obscurity of the idea of personal identity which was involved in it. Into what elements, it was asked, can we analyse our identity, how can we define it? To this Butler replies:—An idea can often be understood, and understood perfectly well, of which we are yet able to give no very precise definition. This is the case, for instance, with such ultimate ideas as those

of likeness and equality. We know perfectly well what we mean when we say that two geometrical figures are like one another or similar, and that twice two are equal to four; and yet we might easily be puzzled to say what constitutes likeness or how we are to define equality. In the same way, we know perfectly well what we mean when we speak of ourselves as being the same persons that we were five or ten years ago, and as likely to continue to be the same persons to-morrow that we are to-day, and yet might have some difficulty in giving such an account of what constitutes our own identity as should be free from all ambiguity and difficulty. And if, undaunted by these difficulties of abstract speculation, we feel it reasonable to make provision for ourselves a week, a month, or a year hence, on the supposition that we shall be still then the same selves that we are now, and consequently necessarily objects of interest to our present selves, it cannot be unreasonable that we should make a similar assumption, and adopt a similar course, with respect to ourselves in some future state of existence. It is perfectly easy to believe, and the belief is perfectly intelligible, that we shall be still the same persons after death that we are at present; and if so, it is as much a part of common sense to attempt, as far as we can, to provide for our future happiness in another life, as to try to secure our future happiness in this present life. Reason recommends such a course, and it approves itself to the ordinary apprehension of common men.

All that is to be put against thus acting are certain fine-spun objections which, identifying personal identity with consciousness, ask how different acts of consciousness can yet constitute the same consciousness. This was a position partly taken up by Locke (who, however, defines personal identity as the sameness of a rational being,—a definition harmless because tauto-

logical), but was pushed to more absurd consequences by some of his followers. "Their contention amounts," says Butler, "when traced and examined to the bottom, to this,—that personality is not a permanent, but a transient thing; that it lives and dies, begins and ends continually; that no man can any more remain one and the same person two moments together than two successive moments can be one and the same moment; that our substance is indeed continually changing: but whether this be so or not is, as it seems, nothing to the purpose, since it is not substance but consciousness alone that constitutes personality; which consciousness, being successive, cannot be the same in any two moments, nor consequently the personality constituted by it." [1]

Such a contention, he answers, seems, in the first place, to render any care for our own immediate future ridiculous; for why, if I am not really the same person a day, an hour, or even a minute hence, should I concern myself with the interests of that virtually different person who by that time I shall have *ex hypothesi* become? Secondly, the imagination that we are not the same person, because our consciousness from moment to moment is not the same consciousness, is opposed to the most certain of all our convictions, namely, this, that, in spite of changes within and without, we remain nevertheless the same persons throughout our conscious lives. Our past acts, if we remember them, and so far as we remember them, we recognise as our own acts, done by us ourselves; and no amount of reasoning will really argue us out of this belief. And this underlying selfhood remains an undeniable fact, whether we believe the self to be a substance or a property of a substance; and it does not much matter which we take it to be. But if the self can remain the same self through all the

[1] *Dissertation*, i. § 6.

changes of our conscious life, there is, as we have seen, no reason to suppose that it will not remain the same through the great change which takes place at death.[1]

There can be but little doubt that Butler has here the best of the argument as against his opponents. From the practical side he has shown conclusively that life becomes a meaningless conglomerate of unconnected moments, were it not strung together by a permanent indivisible selfhood which lies at the base of, and is presupposed in, all our consciousness. What Butler showed from the side of practice, Hume demonstrated indirectly, but even more conclusively, from the point of view of the theory of knowledge. The only consistent attitude, unless we assume a permanent self underlying all our impressions and experiences, in and through the help of which all our knowledge is gradually acquired and built up, is, Hume is driven to confess, a hopeless scepticism—a denial, that is, of the reality or possibility of that knowledge whose existence he set out to explain. But such an attitude of scepticism, he admits, he is himself forced to abandon directly he gets outside of his study door.

In the *Dissertation on the Nature of Virtue* Butler returns to a point on which he had already touched in the *Sermons*—the nature, originality, and authority of conscience; but approaches the matter from a somewhat different point of view to that from which he had hitherto considered it. In the *Sermons* his object had chiefly been to establish the supremacy and authoritativeness of conscience, its right to be heard, and its paramount claim to be obeyed. Here it is the originality and independence of conscience or the moral sense that he mainly insists upon; and the place which it holds as an ultimate, underivable, undeniable part of our

[1] *Analogy*, I. i. §§ 3–6.

nature. "That we have such a moral approving and disapproving faculty is certain," he says, "from our experiencing it in ourselves and recognising it in each other."[1] Its existence is proved by the terms expressive of a distinction between right and wrong, good and evil, which every language contains; by the judgments we pass on one another, and even on imaginary characters; by the moral systems which philosophers have built up, which all presuppose such a distinction; by the approval and disapproval we feel for our own acts and characters. "Nor is it at all doubtful, in the general, what course of action this faculty, or practical discerning power within us, approves, and what it disapproves. For much as it has been disputed wherein virtue consists, or whatever ground for doubt there may be about particulars, yet in general there is in reality an universally acknowledged standard of it. It is that which all ages and all countries have made profession of in public; it is that which every man you meet puts on the show of; it is that which the primary and fundamental laws of all civil constitutions over the face of the earth make it their endeavour to enforce the practice of on mankind, namely, justice, veracity, and regard to common good."[2] The object which this faculty apprehends, on which it passes judgment, are actions (including their motives and intentions) and characters. Whether the act is followed by the intended consequences or not does not make much difference to our moral estimate of it. It is the act itself, apart from its consequences, that we judge; and in the same way we judge of characters, apart largely from all consideration of the good and evil which persons of such characters have it actually in their power to do. But secondly, not only does this faculty apprehend actions and characters as good or bad, virtuous or vicious, it also recognises the one as of

[1] *Dissertation*, ii. § 1. [2] *Ibid.* § 3.

good desert, *i.e.* deserving reward; the other as of ill desert, *i.e.* meriting punishment. The idea of desert is, indeed, less distinct than that of virtue and vice, the reason being probably that it is not easy to judge what has been the amount of effort which the good deed involves, by which the desert is mainly measured; or again, how far the prevalence of temptation may have tended to diminish the ill desert of the offender. Still, that rewards naturally attach to good deeds and characters, punishment to evil, seems a primitive and undeniable pronouncement of our moral judgment. Further, the sum of good and ill desert is relative to, and measured by, our estimate of the nature and capacities of the agent. We do not expect the same measure of attainment in all men. In the next place, prudence seems a kind of virtue, and is approved by our moral sense, just as imprudence meets with some reprobation, and if it reaches a high point, with great. It is absurd, therefore, to say that religion, which bids us exercise prudence with regard to a future which is certainly probable, amounts to selfishness, and is consequently blameworthy. It is but prudence carried into a different and, we may say, higher sphere. Finally, he insists that while virtue is closely associated with benevolence, — benevolence being a most important part of it,—it is not identical with it.[1] There are acts and characters which we recognise as virtuous, quite apart from any tendency we can trace in them to promote directly the happiness of others; while vicious acts do not from a moral point of view cease to be vicious, even though it could be shown that they produced directly more happiness than misery. Besides, even supposing it could be shown that all virtuous acts tended to the production of

[1] This was the doctrine of Shaftesbury, and still more strongly of Hutcheson.

happiness, we should still need moral principles to guide us in the distribution of the happiness we sought to produce; and we seem so constituted as to disapprove of falsehood, unprovoked violence, and injustice, abstracted from all consideration of the overbalance of evil they may appear likely to occasion.[1] But if the moral sense or conscience be thus original and independent, "if human creatures are endowed with such a moral nature as has been here explained, and with a moral faculty, the natural object of which is actions; moral government must consist in rendering them happy and unhappy, in rewarding and punishing them, as they follow, neglect, or depart from the moral rule of action interwoven in their nature, or suggested and enforced by this moral faculty; in rewarding and punishing them on account of their so doing."[2]

In thus returning to the question of the independence and originality of the moral faculty, and the consequent validity of its judgments, Butler was enforcing and vindicating what he rightly felt to be the very centre and pivot of his whole system. For if, as many writers from Hobbes to Mr. Leslie Stephen have maintained, conscience represents nothing more, and we will add nothing higher, than an instinct, gradually evolved by the accumulating experience, whether of the individual or (as is held by the later and more advanced school of psychologists) of the tribe and race, as to what is conducive to the happiness or preservation of the individual himself, or that of the tribe or society at large, then it is impossible to regard its verdicts as having absolute value; nor can we speak intelligibly of reward properly attending or being attached to obedience to it, nor of punishment

[1] *Dissertation*, § 13. The same point had also been insisted in Sermon XII. § 22, note.

[2] *Dissertation*, § 14.

being deservedly the result of neglect or disobedience to its behests. Ill consequences would, no doubt, follow inattention or disobedience to such an instinct, but in what sense would such ill consequences be punishment? If the instinct be an instinct guiding us to the best means to secure our interest or self-preservation, obviously neglect to observe its dictates will involve us in evil or unpleasant results; but it would be a misuse of terms to speak of these as being in any real sense punishments. But if, on the other hand, what conscience reveals is a law of right and wrong, which, whatever the consequences may be of obeying it, reveals itself to us as having a claim on our obedience and a right to be listened to, then we shall feel that we are justly treated if evil consequences do follow our neglect of or disobedience to it, and we may in that case properly speak of such consequences as "punishments," and "deserved punishments." It is to vindicate and justify this point of view, which is really central with him, that his treatment of virtue and vice in the *Dissertation* is mainly, though not exclusively, directed.

CHAPTER VIII

GENERAL ESTIMATE AND SUMMARY

It remains in this concluding chapter to attempt to estimate what have been the most valuable contributions which by his writings Butler has made to English thought; to ascertain the extent and nature of the influence he exerted over his contemporaries and successors; and lastly, to indicate what his views were on certain points which have not at present come under our review.

I. First, then, if we ask ourselves what are the lessons of most value which Butler taught his own and succeeding generations, probably various answers would be given to the question; certainly, various answers have been given; I can but indicate what points in his writings seem to me of most value.

1. I am inclined to give the first place, beyond question, to his vindication of the originality, independence, and authority of conscience. This was the doctrine which he himself placed in the forefront of his *Sermons*, and to which he returned in his latest writing, the *Dissertation on Virtue*. This truth was indeed the bedrock on which his whole system, whether in the *Sermons* or in the *Analogy*, reposes. It was the ultimate belief against which the highest waves of scepticism beat in vain. And he managed not only himself to hold unfalteringly this inexpugnable belief in, and reverence for, conscience, but to a great extent to

bring it home to and impress it on the generation to which he belonged, and even to render it a perpetual heritage of the English race. He did not, of course, invent conscience,—he found it, or rather, refound it; but the clear assertion of its authority has become the one truth beyond all others with which in the minds of most educated Englishmen his name is indissolubly connected. If to Kant Germany owes its just recognition of the "categorical imperative" of duty, not less surely do Englishmen owe to Butler their conscious belief in, and reverence for, conscience; and this belief, enforced by the great weight of his authority, has been, among many national failings and the growing influence of a civilisation too entirely material, the very salt of the national life and character. And this feat of awakening men's minds to the significance and supremacy of conscience was all the more remarkable when we consider that Butler must often have seemed to himself and appeared to his contemporaries to be speaking to deaf ears. The men of his day professed to be guided by quite other influences, and prided themselves on being so guided. To self-interest, and self-interest alone, they made their appeal. The profession of any nobler or more exalted motive was mocked at and derided as hypocrisy. But "the still small voice" was to be heard within them, if they would only listen to it. It was Butler's supreme merit that he ventured in an uncongenial time to call attention to it; and partly by his weighty utterances, which convinced men, as it were, in spite of themselves, but not a little also by the force of an example which, if unobtrusive, was still singularly consistent, he succeeded in bringing home to men what had become for many a dormant or almost forgotten truth.

2. I should be inclined to place second the deep sense of personal religion and of direct obligation to

a moral and personal God which so greatly distinguishes Butler's writings from those of most of his contemporaries. While they approached God from the side of the logical intellect, regarding Him primarily in the light of an intellectual necessity, the inevitable complement of any rational theory of the universe; Butler, advancing to the belief from the side of conscience, found in God, far more than an intellectual abstraction or a logical necessity, a moral judge and governor, of whose nature and purposes conscience spoke to man with no indistinct or uncertain sound. To him it seemed quite incredible that this voice so august and so authoritative should be anything less than the voice of God Himself speaking in and through man. But if so, and if conscience be the culminating fact in the universe as known to man, then it cannot but be that the whole of Nature and all her arrangements are subordinate to a moral purpose, and lend themselves to, and indeed demand, a moral interpretation. Such an interpretation it may indeed be impossible for us, with our limited knowledge and limited outlook, to be able at present fully to give; and this, as we have seen, Butler in the *Analogy* strenuously maintains; but that there is and must be a moral plan and meaning behind and at the back of the whole of Nature he never for a moment doubts. The belief thus defined in a moral and personal God, Butler felt to the core of his being; it underlies all his philosophising; yet the deep religious feeling by which it was accompanied was in general severely repressed, is seldom allowed to obtrude itself, or obviously appear. We are, as we read, conscious of its presence, rather than can clearly perceive it; yet every now and then the closely suppressed feeling breaks, as it were, through the crust of carefully laboured and judicially worded argument, and we find ourselves in the presence of a man to whom, as to Newman afterwards, God and His

judgments and dealings are the most certain of all realities; one who can as little question or doubt them as he can the fact of his own existence. We may refer for illustration to such passages as the beautiful prayer with which the second sermon "On the Love of our Neighbour" concludes; to the greater part of the two sermons on "The love of God"; and to the opening and concluding chapters of the *Analogy*. In this case, again, Butler's message fell on not irresponsive ears; and though it would be absurd to attribute mainly to his influence the religious revival by which the later part of the eighteenth century was marked,—a revival with the methods and some even of the doctrines of which Butler had, as we know even from his published writings, but little sympathy,—yet, on the other hand, his writings did much to secure for the spiritual teachings of Wesley and Whitfield a readier reception among the better sort of more educated people than they would otherwise have met with, and commended them to readers who, apart from his influence, might have been little disposed to listen to them. At the same time, the publication of the *Analogy* seems also to have dealt a blow to popular Deism from which it never wholly recovered. It is at least certain that during the second half of the eighteenth century the deistical writings steadily declined in prestige and influence; and though Mr. Pattison may be right in his contention, that Deism was, when Butler wrote, already on the decline, and that men abandoned its positions more from sheer weariness of the controversy than because they felt themselves overborne by the weight of the opposing arguments, still, the fact remains that no serious answer to the *Analogy* was even attempted, and that Butler was actually left in possession of the field. The arguments of the Deists, if not entirely disposed of, had at least been shown not to be sufficiently strong to up-

set the fabric of the Christian faith; and that faith gained not a little in popular estimation from having for its champion one who was not only so capable but also so judicial, and still more so transparently pious, as was Bishop Butler.

3. This brings me to a third characteristic of his writings which has, for Englishmen at any rate, tended greatly to enhance their permanence and value. The conspicuous fairness and impartiality with which he states his case: his anxiety not to exaggerate but rather to underestimate and understate the evidence for the position he is maintaining: his scrupulous and undeviating regard and attention to fact. It was this love of and anxious regard for fact which led him himself to desert the high *à priori* road, so popular with most of his predecessors and contemporaries, and follow the safer path of careful observation, and of generalisation, based on those observations, so that at each step his readers should be able to verify and judge of his conclusions in the light of their own experience. It was by the adoption of such a method that Butler may be almost said to have brought about in the sphere of morals and religion the same revolution which Bacon is supposed to have effected in the domain of natural science. The methods which had delighted Clarke and his contemporaries, so pretentious in form, so unsatisfying in substance, came gradually under Butler's influence to be distrusted and abandoned, and were replaced by appeals to sober fact and individual experience. Certainly the reality, if not the comprehensiveness, of the conclusions reached, has gained by the change. Men now feel that they stand on firm ground; that the conclusions of the religious consciousness rest, or are capable of resting, on the same ground of individual verification and widely extended experience as do those of science itself. Closely associated with

this reverence for fact was another characteristic which has won for Butler's works honourable distinction among theological writings, namely, a readiness to face unwelcome or unpalatable truths, if only they are supported by sufficient evidence. His whole writings exhibit a brave and scrupulous care not to pass by any objection, if real and well founded, merely because it is awkward or difficult to meet. In his sermons on the Love of God and the Ignorance of Man he has insisted on what he calls resignation, which might perhaps be described as a kind of Christian stoicism, as one of the chiefest of Christian graces and virtues; he has himself practised with more than ordinary success the virtue which he preached. It is this feature in his writings which has wrung from Mr. Leslie Stephen, in spite of the many unfavourable criticisms which he feels bound to pass upon them in detail, no unstinted measure of praise. It is this which will always recommend them to tempers of a manly and resolute type. "Though he slay me, yet will I put my trust in him," was scarcely less Butler's motto than that of the Psalmist of old.

4. We will take next an aspect of Butler's method, much insisted on by Mr. Gladstone, to which that distinguished statesman attaches the greatest importance.[1] "No writer," says he, "has ever insisted more strenuously than Butler that, on the one hand, the amount of the belief which is yielded to any conclusion must be measured by the amount and character of the evidence which can be adduced in support of it; but that, on the other hand, in all practical matters (and religion is, of course, concerned directly with practice) we have to content ourselves with a kind and amount of evidence which falls far short of demonstration. It behoves us, consequently, to act in this as we do in all other practical matters, and

[1] *Subsidiary Studies*, part i. chap. i. pp. 6–9.

instead of complaining that the evidence is not greater or more complete than it is, to try and ascertain honestly and fairly on which side the balance of evidence lies, and having done so, guide our conduct in accordance with the results thus arrived at." To do this, to trust the conclusions we have honestly come to, may be, as Butler suggests, a part of our probation. Certain it is that, were the evidence in these matters more demonstrative and complete than it is, there would be less merit in attending to the conclusions based upon it. On the other hand, the incompleteness of the evidence leaves large possibilities for the exercise by us of faith and hope, which nevertheless may be based upon reason and a careful scrutiny of the evidence submitted to us. It is because the *Analogy* thus inculcates, as a matter of good sense and duty, a method and course of proceeding which in all practical matters men of wisdom, and pre-eminently statesmen, are constantly called upon to adopt, that therefore, in Mr. Gladstone's view, the careful study of the work furnishes so excellent a training for those who in any capacity are called on to mix in affairs. To be content with the evidence we have, and using it for all that it is worth, but not for more than it is worth, to come upon it to the best conclusion we can reach; and, having come to such a conclusion, to carry it out manfully and consistently in act,—this is the course which makes a man great in affairs, which constitutes the spirit of true statesmanship. But it is a spirit very similar to this which, applied to matters of religion, constitutes in Butler's view true wisdom. It is such a spirit which from beginning to end of the *Analogy* he consistently advocates, one which he never wearies of pressing upon his readers as the secret of life here, and not less assuredly of life hereafter.

5. Another valuable thought in Butler, closely connected in his mind with the last, is his clear apprehen-

sion of the great extent of human ignorance,—or what comes to the same thing only stated in other words, the narrow limits of human knowledge. Like some modern Socrates, he reiterates with emphasis and insistence the message—"Know thyself"; "Recognise, indeed, thine own powers and capacities, but recognise no less their limitations and deficiencies"; "Lay no claim to an omniscience thou dost not and canst not possess." This doctrine comes very near to being the central doctrine of his system. In the first place in which it appears, the sermon on the Ignorance of Man, Butler, while hinting at several results which are worked out at length in the *Analogy*, uses the doctrine mainly for moral purposes, to point out how real a part of our probation this condition of partial ignorance may be, and also to enforce those tempers of teachableness, humility, open-mindedness, and faith which should be the natural consequences of such a condition. In the *Analogy* the doctrine is used as a key by which to unlock some of the dark riddles which the Universe presents to us, and of the mysteries in revealed religion itself. Thus in the first part of the *Analogy* Butler finds in the narrow limits of human knowledge the explanation of, and the answer to, the objections which are often brought against the arrangements of the Universe, or the laws of nature, on the ground that they are incompatible with the wisdom, justice, or goodness of God. Such objections, answers Butler, might have weight were we in a position to view the plan of the Universe as a whole; but inasmuch as we can at most apprehend or grasp but a very small part of the whole scheme, and have necessarily a very imperfect conception of the object to which the whole plan is directed, it is obvious that we are not in any sort of position rightly to criticise the means; and that objections are quite unavailing to which it is always possible that, did we know more,

a complete and triumphant answer might be given. And these considerations advanced by Butler receive more force when we observe that in many cases the discoveries of recent science have had the effect of showing things, which were supposed to be useless and even harmful, to be necessary or advantageous; and further, instincts or arrangements, which have been regarded in the past as wantonly cruel, appear, as a result of fuller knowledge, to be necessary and even beneficent. It must further be remembered that, as Butler urges, not only have we an imperfect knowledge of the field which may be regarded as coming within the scope of our observation, but there are whole regions both of time and space which lie wholly beyond our ken; and it is obvious that the plan, or scheme, which God designs must have reference not to this world alone but to the Universe as a whole. This fact opens up possibilities, and suggests problems, which we cannot imagine or conceive. But while Butler rises, as scarcely any other theological thinker has risen, to the full measure of this high argument, he is careful to point out that within the limits which actually concern us we have sufficient information at our disposal, if we will only reasonably make use of it, to assure us of the truth of the main positions of our religion, and to enable us to exercise all reasonable foresight in respect of our conduct here and now.

What is true of nature and its arrangements is equally likely to be true in the sphere of revelation; at least, we shall think so if we recognise the same God to be the author alike of nature and revelation. For revelation, no less than nature, presents itself as a scheme imperfectly understood; revelation no less than nature aims at ends, and accomplishes them by means, which we can, at best, imperfectly apprehend. Here again our ignorance will naturally cause many things in

the substance of the revelation to seem unexpected, unintelligible, even perhaps open to objection. Many such things would cease to seem so did we only know more, and could we see further. We are still in a position of seeing in a glass darkly, of having to read riddles which surpass our power of guessing. Yet here again there are some points which we recognise as beyond dispute. That God in revelation aims at moral ends we take for granted; and also, that all the arrangements are such as are directly conducive to a moral result. And therefore here it is, as Butler urges, in the last degree unreasonable to use the fact of our ignorance—the fact that we do not know more than we actually do know—as a positive argument against doctrines of the truth of which we are assured on sufficient evidence. Revelation has done so much to raise the moral standard of mankind that the fact that there are difficulties, due to our ignorance or imperfect apprehension, on certain points connected with it, should be no bar in the eyes of reasonable men to our accepting it as a whole.

To some extent we may employ the same line of argument not only to meet difficulties in the contents of revelation, but also to meet objections which may be brought against the kind and amount of revelation vouchsafed to us. Here again the question how the Infinite would communicate with, and make His nature and will known to the finite, is a matter so incomprehensible and so inevitably veiled in mystery that it is impossible to dogmatise about it. All that we can do is to assure ourselves that what claims to be a revelation from on high is of such a character as not to be incompatible with the divine justice and goodness, and that it can produce such credentials as, taken in connection with the character of the revelation itself, make the truth and reality of the revelation more likely than not. We

must not then arbitrarily ascribe a completeness and infallibility to the divine revelation which it does not claim for itself; nor, on the other hand reject it because the revelation is not as complete, or as completely authorised and attested, as we could wish it to have been. Considerations such as these are not without weight at the present time, and should help us in dealing with those questions as to the extent and character of the inspiration of the Old Testament which are being now discussed.

6. We come now to consider what value we must attach to the main argument of the *Analogy* itself. Do we get help either in the way of direct proof, or as supplying answers to objections, from considering the analogies and resemblances that exist between the course of nature, as observation, experience, and science reveal it to us, and that account of God's methods of working in the spiritual world which revelation makes known to us? I think we must conclude we do, though the answer to the doubts and perplexities of our own time may be less conclusive than was the answer to contemporary Deism. To the Deists Butler's answer was indeed complete or almost complete. Granted, as most of the Deists thought to be the case, and even held to be demonstrably certain, that the Universe is the work of an all-wise, all-powerful, and perfectly good Creator and Governor, then to show that the works and laws of nature which are admitted to be His handiwork, exhibit the same kind of difficulties, and are open to the same kind of objection, which are taken to the doctrines contained in revelation, is a real answer to those who in the latter case urge these difficulties and objections as fatal to the truth and authority of that revelation. If, in the first case, the difficulties and objections urged are not sufficient to shake men's faith as to the divine authorship and governance of the Universe, why should similar difficulties occurring in revelation

shake their faith as to its divine origin and authority? And as against the Deists again, Butler's other contention, on which we have already commented, had great force. Is it not probable that in the sphere of nature the difficulties which present themselves, and the apparent anomalies that occur, are to be explained by the consideration that our knowledge is very limited, and that we can apprehend very imperfectly either the objects at which God aims, or the means by which He seeks to encompass these ends and to work out these objects? But if this explanation holds good, and by many of the Deists it was considered to hold good, in the case of nature, may not a similar explanation hold good in the case of much that is obscure or dark or difficult in the contents of revelation itself? Here too, as in nature, we are dealing with a scheme or plan which is too vast and far-reaching, to be altogether understood; so that it need fill us with no surprise if there are parts and elements which seem anomalous and contrary to what we should expect.

And this latter observation of Butler's, perhaps, unlike the former, avails as an answer of some force to meet the deeper and more far-reaching scepticism of our own day. For the question raised now no longer relates to the divine authorship of revelation only, but also touches the divine authorship and government of the Universe itself. Is the structure of nature, as science reveals it to us, compatible, it is asked, with the belief in a divine authorship and divine government of it? It is obviously to the point to say that while there is much, as philosophers from Socrates to Mr. Herbert Spencer have pointed out, which points to such an origin and such a government, our knowledge is yet so limited that we may well set down what seems to us incompatible with or contradictory to such a conclusion to the score of our ignorance; and all the more since many of the discoveries of science have tended to give a meaning, and a

beneficent meaning, to facts and arrangements which, before such knowledge, seemed to us often dark and inscrutable. And then, the doctrines of evolution and development, which hold so important a place in all modern scientific speculation, have in several ways come to the aid of apologetics, and have helped at certain points to enforce and expound Butler's main argument. For, while they tell us nothing about the origin of the world or the initial force which set evolution in motion, or the mind which determined the direction which development should take, and are therefore as reconcilable with Theism as with any other hypothesis of the ultimate origin of the Universe,—and even tend to confirm the ultimate postulates of Theism, since they recognise, as far as our knowledge extends, in man's intellectual and moral endowments the highest product to which evolution has given birth and development has reached,—they have, on the other hand, almost indefinitely widened our conception of the method of God's working, bringing home to our minds, in a way in which it had never been brought home before, an apprehension of the infinite extent of His operations and plans alike in time and space. In this way such ideas have added force to the plea which Butler urges against overestimating the range of our knowledge or our faculties, and raising up for ourselves difficulties because we cannot see more than we do. Within the range of our vision, and in ways that we can see, things are working for good, for order, and righteousness; is it not wise, then, and reasonable to "trust the larger hope," and to hold that beyond that range, and in ways we do not see, they are doing the same?

And turning next from nature to revelation, do not these same ideas give us in this field a better answer to many of our difficulties than any which Butler was able to suggest? We are moving, indeed, along the lines

which he indicated; we are following out, as he bade us, the analogy which exists between nature and revelation; but new ideas have given our method a fresh direction and in some respects a more hopeful outlook. If we can trace everywhere evolution and development in the field of nature, may we not expect to find them, and do we not actually find them, in the sphere of revelation as well? St. John seems to regard revelation as a gradual process, continuing through the ages, culminating in the clear manifestation of the Son of God, who was yet the same Logos that had been in the world from the beginning.[1] The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews tells us that God, who had "at sundry times and in divers manners" spoken unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son.[2] But if we thus conceive of revelation as a gradual revealing of God Himself to man, a process of gradual development, of self-realisation continued through many ages, then it is obvious that the earlier stages in the process, though they undoubtedly contained germs of truth, must have been incomplete and imperfect, adapted to the needs and ideas of ages which were yet in a rudimentary stage of enlightenment. But further, the moral ideas possible in such ages must have differed widely from the full light of Christian truth; and we can well understand the occurrence at such a time of beliefs which, while mixed up with elements of truth, seem to us to be at best imperfect and a stage only towards something better. As instances of such beliefs, we may quote that one prevalent among the Jews, that they were commissioned by God to destroy the Canaanite races, or that other one, so widely held, that the sins of the fathers were visited directly upon the children. In each of these beliefs we recognise now an element of truth and right; but mixed up with it, as we look back

[1] St. John i. 1–6. [2] Hebrews i. 1.

with our fuller light, there is also what certainly seems to us a mixture of falsehood as well. And the conception of God Himself has gradually matured. Almost from the first the Hebrew people thought of God as a person, as a creator, one standing in intimate relations to themselves. To Moses he is revealed as the Great Lawgiver delivering those ten "words" or principles which have been the foundation-stones of almost all progressive morality ever since; while at the same time He proclaims Himself also as One who is Eternal and Unchangeable. To the prophets His spiritual nature becomes gradually more apparent; they learn to regard Him as one whose object it is to draw men ever more and more into conformity with Himself, and for this purpose as founding a kingdom of righteousness upon earth. If this kingdom assumed in the minds of many a too material shape, that need not surprise us, when we recognise that religion is throughout a process of growth and development, and that ideas appear in germ and in imperfect shapes before men can apprehend them in their complete and final form. In that form they were at length presented to us in the Person of our Lord Jesus Christ; but it has taken nineteen centuries more to enter into the full meaning of His teaching, nor do we seem yet to have sounded all its depths. Different ages and different Churches have made their several contributions; but all the lessons are not yet exhausted, nor all its meaning fully ascertained. But this slowly maturing process bears, it is obvious, great resemblance to those age-long processes by which in the providence of God this world has been gradually fashioned and prepared, first for the appearance of life, and then to be the habitation of intellectual, moral, and spiritual beings such as man.

And as in nature, so too in revelation, these ideas of evolution and development have tended to heighten and enhance our idea of the scope and far-reachingness

of the divine plan, or scheme of God's redemption. It may be that in a sense analogous to, and yet different from, that in which St. Paul uses the expression, the whole creation has from its earliest birth been "groaning and travailing in pain together until now,"—travailing in the hope "that itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glory of the liberty of the sons of God";[1] and that we are the heirs of all the ages, "that they without us should not be made perfect."[2] But supposing this to be so, or even if it probably may be so, then what a vista of a great far-reaching plan do we see before us, and how clear does it become that God's thoughts must be in many respects not as our thoughts, nor His ways as our ways.[3] But if we adopt this view, then again we may safely conclude, with Butler, that there will be, as in nature so in revelation, difficulties which we shall not be able to solve, and arrangements the meaning of which cannot, at present, be made clear to us. And surely the fact that the great argument of the *Analogy* should thus prove so adaptible to new conditions and new discoveries is in itself no little proof of its value, and should add extra strength and security to the reliance which we place upon it.

II. And by this last consideration we are led naturally to the next point on which I propose to touch,—the estimation in which Butler's works have been held during the one hundred and fifty years which have now elapsed since first they were published. On the whole, I think we may say that their influence during all this period has been steadily growing. When the *Analogy* first appeared it produced a great, though not an overwhelming, impression. Queen Caroline spoke in approving terms of it, and admitted its author to the circle of her intimate acquaintance. Many other contem-

[1] Romans viii. 21, 22. [2] Hebrews xi. 40. [3] Isaiah lv. 8.

poraries speak of it in similar terms of praise. It may perhaps be questioned if we can ascribe the downfall of Deism to its influence. The movement may, as Mr. Pattison maintains, already have spent its force. Still, it is certain that Butler took his place at once in the forefront of philosophical writers of his day; that his elevation to a bishopric was universally regarded as natural and right; and that the Deists, on their side, never attempted any formal answer to the arguments he advanced. Whether we can go a step further than this, and set down, as Mr. Gladstone is inclined to do,[1] to the effect of Butler's writings that religious reaction which (quite apart from the preaching of Wesley and Whitfield, whose influence was mainly restricted to the poor and uneducated) prevailed among the upper and more educated classes during the later part of the eighteenth century, is more doubtful. While the fact that such a revival took place is patent enough, the causes which produced it are more obscure. The direct evidence which Mr. Gladstone is able to bring forward in support of his position is, it must be confessed, somewhat slight, —a passing notice of a not very complimentary character attributed to Pitt, a somewhat doubtful reference to the argument of the *Analogy* in one of the letters of Lord Chesterfield, and the more substantial fact that during these years a good many editions of Butler's works were called for and published, some of them even in remote parts of the country. What is more certain is that during those years these writings took more and more the position of a classic, and came to be looked upon with ever-increasing confidence as the best and most reasonable defence which the eighteenth century had produced of the fundamental positions of the Christian faith. While of other works the influence was greatest at first, and in course of time gradually fell off, of

[1] *Studies*, part i. chap x. pp. 132-134.

Butler's works almost alone can it be said that their fame was as great, or even greater, at the end of the century as when they first appeared; and though men's thoughts—as is evident from the popularity of Paley's writings and the other works on "Evidences" by which they were followed—took other directions than those suggested by the *Analogy*, still, the fact that constant editions of the *Analogy* continued to be called for and read is good evidence that Butler's argument was regarded as neither unimportant nor superseded.

Of Butler's influence in the present century it is possible to speak with greater confidence. That influence is indeed restricted, as Mr. Gladstone has pointed out, to the English-speaking race. On the continent of Europe, though a writer of eminence here and there—including Lotze in our own time—may have spoken of him approvingly, he is practically unknown; but on our own race his influence has been very great. America, no less than England, Scotland, and Ireland, has done emphatic honour to him. The American editions of his writings have been scarcely less numerous than the English. Two at least of the greatest leaders of the Oxford movement—Cardinal Newman and Mr. Keble—have expressed in no grudging terms their obligations to him; and have acknowledged how profoundly their whole cast of thought and method were determined by his writings. The unique position which, among English theological writers, he has come to occupy is further emphasised by the fact that for more than a quarter of a century his writings were selected, along with the works of the greatest authors of antiquity, to hold a place in the classical schools at Oxford. And though after a time they were deposed from this place, this deposition must be attributed not to any doubt of their value, or decline in the appreciation accorded to them, but partly to the

growth of the historical spirit, which made it seem anomalous to single out the writings of one special author, apart from the circumstances in which they originated, for separate and special study; partly, as Mr. Gladstone suggests, to the force of the reaction against the High Church movement, which was, when Butler's works were ultimately excluded from the schools, just at its height.

Nor do the phenomena of our own time witness to any falling-off in the interest attaching either to Butler's theories or his method. If it be true that a more critical attitude has in the last half century been taken up towards them than in the preceding hundred years, still the very fact that they in particular should have been singled out for criticism by writers of such note, and so widely removed from one another, as Dr. Martineau, Mr. Matthew Arnold, Mr. Leslie Stephen, and Dr. Fairbairn, is certainly an unconscious testimony to the importance and abiding value of the system criticised. And each one of these writers, it is further to be observed, if he has found points to blame, has added also, from his own point of view, a meed of praise to Butler's reputation. On the other hand, as a set-off to their criticisms, our own day has witnessed two most impressive and remarkable contributions to Butler's fame: Dean Church's appreciation of him [1]—so judicial, so weighty, so well reasoned—cannot lightly be set aside; while Mr. Gladstone's monumental edition of his works, left to the English-speaking race as the best legacy to which he could dedicate the declining years of a busy and well-spent life, is a remarkable proof of the fascination which Butler's method and seriousness exercised over a strong mind as much devoted to the cause of religion as it was energetic in the conduct of affairs, and of the unexhausted

[1] See article on "Butler" in *Pascal and other Sermons*, Sermon II.

importance which he still believed to attach to Butler's conclusions.

III. It remains to conclude this chapter by drawing attention to two points which, while they lie apparently outside Butler's system, are yet really closely connected with it, and occupied an important place in the tenour of his life—the view which he took of the nature and functions of the Church, and the importance he attached to certain aspects of social reform and philanthropic activity. Both these questions bring him into interesting relations to movements of our own day.

1. His views as to the nature and functions of the Church are perfectly explicit, and receive expression in three separate passages of his writings—in the first chapter of the *Analogy*, Part II.,[1] in the sermon preached on behalf of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel,[2] and in his *Charge to the Clergy of Durham*.[3] Like most of his contemporaries, he believed in man having received at the creation, or shortly after, a revelation of that body of truths which were regarded as comprised in "natural religion." But this revelation once given, it was left to man's own choice and free-will either to treasure up and preserve, or else to neglect and ignore it. As a matter of fact, the majority of mankind, not "caring to keep the knowledge of God in their minds," or to practise the obligations which that knowledge entailed, lapsed gradually into all kinds of superstition, ignorance, and profaneness. Indeed, their state in respect of true religion would have become almost desperate had not God chosen for Himself one peculiar people to keep alive the knowledge of His name, and to exercise those duties of piety and religious observance which that knowledge naturally entails. To the people thus selected God imparted, in many ways and in many portions, an ever clearer knowledge of His nature

[1] See especially §§ 10, 11, 15. [2] *Ss.* i. §§ 4, 5. [3] §§ 12, 13.

and His will. Lawgivers, prophets, and psalmists, by their spoken utterances or their writings, spread among such as were willing to receive them the messages with which they were severally entrusted; and the people as a whole acted, sometimes consciously, oftener unconsciously, as trustees of and witnesses to the faith, which was their national heritage. Thus they became "the servants of God" for the redemption and salvation of mankind.

In the fulness of time, "when infinite Wisdom saw proper, the general doctrine of religion was authoritatively republished in its purity; and the particular dispensation of Providence, which this world is under, manifested to all men, even the dispensation of the grace of God towards us as sinful lost creatures, to be recovered by repentance through a Mediator who was 'to make reconciliation for iniquity and to bring in everlasting righteousness,' and at length establish that new state of things foretold by the Prophet Daniel under the character of a kingdom 'which the God of Heaven would set up, and which should never be destroyed.' This, including a more distinct account of the instituted means whereby Christ the Mediator would 'gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad,' and conduct them 'to the place he is gone to prepare for them,' is the Gospel of the kingdom, which He foretells and commands should be preached in all the world for a witness to all nations. And it first began to be spoken by the Lord and was confirmed unto us by them that heard Him. 'God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to His own will'; by which means it was spread very widely among the nations of the world, and became a witness unto them."[1]

[1] *Ss.* i. § 3.

"When thus much was accomplished, as there is a wonderful uniformity in the conduct of Providence, Christianity was left with Christians to be transmitted down pure and genuine, or to be corrupted and sunk, in like manner as the religion of nature had been before left with mankind in general."[1] But there was this difference between the new and the older dispensation: that while under the older dispensation the revelation had been originally entrusted to and preserved by a single nation, for the maintenance and spread of the Gospel, and for its practical enforcement upon mankind, our Saviour instituted an universal Church, in which the pure word was to be preached, the sacraments duly administered, and a settled form of worship perpetually celebrated. To the Church thus constituted a double function was assigned. On the one hand, it was intended to keep alive and enforce the truths with which it was entrusted among those who professed to be its members, and to see, so far as it could, that these truths exercised a practical influence on, and received a practical expression in, their lives. On the other hand, it was destined to be in its different branches a perpetual witness to the nations among whom it was planted, who had not yet themselves received the message with which it was charged. The first of these objects it effected, and still in part effects, by a settled system of religious education, in which the children belonging to it are instructed "by the ministry of the Word," and by an ordered system of public rites, offices, and sacraments, partly ordained by Christ Himself, partly instituted by the Church at large or by particular churches, which have had discretion left them and have received authority for the purpose. The work, on the other hand, of witnessing to the heathen has naturally devolved mainly on that particular portion of the Church, or those particular

[1] *Ibid.* § 4.

Churches, the members of which have from whatever cause been brought into more immediate contact with, and so been rendered specially responsible for, heathen countries or races. It was a keen perception of the obligation imposed in this respect upon the English Church and nation by the then rapidly developing growth of our trade and spread of our colonies (or as they were then more usually called, plantations) which made Butler so strenuous a supporter of the recently founded Society for the Propagation of the Gospel. He also maintains, what everyone who has taken a practical interest in missions cannot fail to feel, the intimate connection which exists between these two sides of the Church's work, the maintenance and vitality of religion at home, and the spread of it abroad. If religion be an active power amongst ourselves, the impulse to spread it to others also is sure to arise and to make itself felt; while contrariwise, wherever the preaching of the Gospel to the heathen is going on in earnest, the zeal displayed will react upon, and so will quicken and strengthen the religious life of those who stay at home. Here, if anywhere, it is true that the measure with which we mete, shall be measured to us again; that he that gives, to him it shall be given.

In neither of these aspects can it be said that the work of the Church of England in the eighteenth century was altogether satisfactory, and Butler himself is not unaware of, indeed forcibly recognises, the deficiencies. A beginning of foreign missions, and missions to our own countrymen who were settling abroad, had, it is true, been made. The Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge, and its offshoot the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts, had both been founded; but it was still the day of small things; nor had the country or Church as yet by any means waked up to the obligations which were

devolving upon it. At home things, as far as church life was concerned, were almost worse. Butler in his *Durham Charge* gives us some insight into the condition of things which prevailed, and the deficiencies which needed to be made good. The picture which he suggests rather than actually draws is decidedly a dark one, and is confirmed by other good contemporary evidence. The churches, even the chancels for which the clergy were responsible, were neglected and falling into decay; new churches were hardly ever built; congregations were sparse; confirmation and the visiting of the sick were often neglected; and Butler has to enforce upon his clergy, as if it were almost a new truth, the opportunities for usefulness and influence which such occasions furnished. Nor does he hesitate to take even a bolder line than this, and to point to the loss which the Church suffered, as compared with the Roman communion or even the Mohammedan body, from the absence and neglect of external observances. Such observances, so far from being any necessary hindrance to spiritual religion, will be, he holds, for many people a great help towards it; and, in any case, they will enable the Church to fulfil more effectually its duty of being "a witness to the world." Men are by such observances in spite of themselves, reminded of the reality and importance of the claims which religion makes upon them. And as it is one of the primary objects and duties of the Church to give them such a reminder, it is clear that no Church which neglects external observances or allows them through carelessness to fall into disuse, can be adequately fulfilling its proper function.

So far Butler's teaching is much in accord with much that has been emphasised by the religious revival of our own days; and the leaders of the Oxford movement were in this respect perfectly justified in claiming Butler as a pioneer in the reforms which they insti-

tuted, and in sheltering themselves under his great authority. But there is another side of their doctrine of which, it must be confessed, we should look in vain for any justification in his writings, a side with which, indeed, I am inclined to think he would have had but little sympathy,—the stress which they have laid upon the efficacy of the sacraments as being the sole, or at any rate the only usual, channel for the communication of divine grace. For the sacraments, as ordinances ordained by Christ Himself, Butler could not but have entertained, in accordance with his principles, the greatest possible veneration. Indeed, a contemporary has recorded the divine sweetness and beauty with which his face was filled as he took part in his later years in the celebration of the Holy Communion. But he nowhere weaves any theory of the sacraments, even for purposes of illustration, into the thread of his argument; and we find hardly more than a passing reference to them either in the *Sermons* or the *Analogy*. Indeed, a high doctrine of sacramental grace, while there are analogies in nature which seem to illustrate and even favour it, must always have something mysterious, and even something arbitrary, about it; and Butler was sufficiently a child of the eighteenth century not to be drawn to doctrines which presented themselves as mysterious and in any sense arbitrary. Thus, then, while he loyally accepted the sacraments as an ordinance of Christ Himself, and attached to them the importance which they naturally have as being such, he certainly did not give them special prominence in his teaching, nor enter specially into the rationale of them. In this, as in a good deal else, he reflects faithfully the spirit of his age.

2. Of the three lines of practical philanthropy which most interested him, the importance which he attached to the first grew directly out of the view which he took

of the duties and functions of the Church. Butler stepped forward as a champion of the education of the poor at a time when the cause found few friends and was looked upon with suspicion or doubt even among those who claimed to be the most enlightened and advanced. But if the business of the Church was, as Butler conceived it to be, to see that the truths of Christianity were not allowed to fall into oblivion and neglect, but should exercise their proper influence, at any rate on all those who professed to belong to the Christian society, then it was essential that the children entrusted to the Church's care should receive due instruction in the truths it was appointed to guard. Nor was this all; Butler had, further, a strong conviction that life could only be properly and worthily lived when men used to the utmost the means which God had in any way placed in their power for the purpose. But knowledge was one of the most important means towards living worthily with which God had entrusted mankind. To deprive children, therefore, of knowledge, *i.e.* not to instruct them as far as they were capable of receiving instruction, was to inflict a great wrong upon them, for it was tantamount to depriving them of what God had designed as a means which should help them to live worthier, nobler, more prudent, and so happier, lives. To keep a child ignorant in a civilised nation was, he held, to deprive him of his birthright; nor was the consideration that he might use the knowledge given to him amiss for a moment to be weighed against such a manifest wrong.

The second line in which his philanthropic activity manifested itself was in the attempt to make the rich and the well-to-do more sensible of their obligations towards the poor and destitute. This topic forms the theme of the second of his Sermons preached on Public Occasions. The obligation he characteristically enough

bases, in the first place, on the relations which in the course of nature arise between the two orders; for "nature" is to him always our surest guide in all moral questions. Now, in the course of nature the rich cannot but be, to a great extent (more then, perhaps, than now, though even now this remains largely true) the guides, instructors, and examples of the poor,—those from whom the poor take largely their tone. For the poor, having, as Butler points out, but limited time for reflection, and for the most part but limited powers of that kind, almost necessarily take their cue from their social superiors. But this fact in itself constitutes an obligation on the rich to set them a good example; at the least, to be careful that the influence they exert over them is not harmful. Further, he held that, since the poor have but limited means of obtaining instruction for themselves, it is the business of the rich and well-to-do to see that wholesome positive instruction is placed within their reach; but on this point his argument runs up into that of the last section. On another side the rich are under an equally obvious obligation to relieve the distresses and necessities of the poor, which the latter cannot always meet for themselves. Here the very fact that the rich have the means of doing this constitutes in itself an obligation. The chief question will therefore be, not whether they ought to do it, but in what ways they may best and most effectually do it; and on this point Butler pleads the claims of charity schools and also of organised hospitals as being two of the best proved and best regulated means of helping the necessitous poor.

This brings me to the third point of his philanthropic activity,—the interest he ever showed in infirmaries and hospitals. This interest was alike conspicuous at Bristol, in London, and at Newcastle. Perhaps the sympathy he felt with this mode of aiding the poor may

have been quickened by the indifferent health from which throughout his life he more or less suffered. But the *Analogy* also shows that the relief of sickness had another claim upon his interest as well. Why God should have permitted disease seemed to him, in our present state of ignorance or of partial knowledge, as inscrutable a mystery as why He should have permitted the existence of moral evil. Both things alike we have to take for granted; they are facts, and undeniable facts. But in both cases alike God has enabled man to discover, or has revealed to him, remedies which he can apply for the alleviation of these admitted evils. In both cases, as it is man's obvious interest, so it is his obvious duty, to apply these remedies which God places within his reach. But the poor, partly from want of knowledge, even more from want of means, have not the power of obtaining for themselves these alleviations and remedies. What, then, can be more appropriate than that those who have alike the knowledge and the power should help to bring the means of cure within the reach of those who could not provide them for themselves? Hospitals have, as Butler further points out, many collateral advantages for the moral improvement of those who are inmates of them; and the fact that our Lord Himself spent so much of His time on earth in healing the sick furnishes Christians with a strong additional inducement to go and do likewise.

If I am now to make a summary of my summary, I would conclude it thus. While Butler was not one of the very greatest of thinkers, nor one of the very chiefest of saints, he combined the characteristics of the thinker and the saint in an unusual degree. Never afraid to exercise reason, or to submit calmly and seriously to examination the facts which he considered established, however formidable and disquieting they might appear, he yet never abandoned his fundamental

religious beliefs and principles—that God is, that He is just, that He is good, that He is Love, that He cares for man and seeks and longs to redeem and save him. On the other hand, he so holds his religious beliefs that they never blind him to facts. While his thinking is done under a stronger sense of the greatness of the issues involved, and consequently with greater seriousness, than that of other men, it is real and true thinking, honest, circumspect, and consistent. Such a mind seems to me to have a peculiar value and a special message for times of transition like our own, when discovery is active and speculation almost unlimited. For what men at such times need more than all besides, is "in patience to possess their souls"; and this is just the frame of mind which the *Analogy*, beyond all other books, inculcates and encourages.

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